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*This Means of Grace*

*Other publications by the author:*

THE ULTRAMONTANISM OF  
SAINT BONIFACE

THE EXPANSION OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

*This  
Means  
of  
Grace*



*by  
John Higgins*



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To  
My Mother  
Alice Gore-Browne Higgins  
who in my early child-  
hood told me the story  
of Jesus and His love.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is my hope that this little book will help some lay people discover new shades of meaning in the Holy Communion, a service loved through the ages by untold millions.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Church Pension Fund for permission to quote from *The Hymnal* of 1916 and of 1940.

My thanks are due to my secretary, Margaret Malcolm Shepard, for deciphering a badly written manuscript and for typing it.

My wife, Marion Laird Higgins, has been patient in listening, helpful in criticism, and a constant inspiration while the manuscript was in preparation.

—JOHN HIGGINS

Minneapolis, 1945





Eternal Saviour, pleading now  
Before the throne on high,  
From out thy love's full treasure-store  
Our fainting souls supply.

Bread of thy Body give me Lord,  
So shall I strengthened be,  
In life's grim struggle well-sustained,  
If thou art found in me.

Wine of thy life-Blood grant, dear Lord,  
And in its mystic flow,  
Slake thou my never-ending thirst,  
The Father's love to know.

Accept, O Lord, the praise and pray'r  
Which now we offer thee;  
Thy Spirit bless us 'til that day  
When we thy Face shall see.

—J. H.



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### The Collect for Maundy Thursday

**A**LMIGHTY Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, did institute the Sacrament of his Body and Blood; Mercifully grant that we may thankfully receive the same in remembrance of him, who in these holy mysteries giveth us a pledge of life eternal; the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. *Amen.*



## INTRODUCTION

**I**T IS NOT STRANGE that the Holy Communion, in its several forms, should still be the most important service that the Church offers her members. If all the Bibles of the world were burned beyond recovery, and if all of the Books of Common Prayer suffered a similar fate except for the Holy Communion service, we still should have a sufficient statement of our holy religion. For that service has all the important teachings of the Christian faith: who God is and what He is like; the nature and destiny of man; the coming of Jesus Christ and the Atonement on the Cross; the Resurrection and the sure promise that "like him we too shall rise." All of the earnest desires of our own hearts and of the common heart of humanity find expression in this service, whether it be comfort for our personal sorrows, or our earnest desire for Christian unity, or world peace, or winning the world for Christ. That is why the appeal of the service has been so continuing, so satisfying, so compelling.

A measure of the importance of Holy Communion is the age-long thunderclouds of controversy with which it has been surrounded; for nobody quarrels about that

## Introduction

which he does not love. But in these latter years non-Roman Catholic Christians have come to realize that the Holy Communion can have other meanings than the one single meaning which some ardent reformer attached thereto four centuries ago. We are more willing now to do as He commanded, and in doing His will we shall come to know more about the other meanings of the Sacred Feast. It is surely true that the disciples of old had no erudite theology of the Lord's Supper; they simply followed their Master's pre-crucifixion directions and did what He told them to do. And as they obeyed the directions, as "they ate that bread and drank that cup," they found that Jesus was somehow more real to them and that He was nearer to them after the Holy Meal than before. Christ has not changed over the centuries, and modern man may yet find that the same results which came to those disciples in the long ago will come to him from the same obedience.

We have been going through an era which has italized *personal religion*, and personal religion may be a very nice thing to have; only it must not stop there, else it will become impersonal! The Holy Communion is a sufficient warning that, unless a man's personal religion is expressed in a corporate manner, his religion is likely to be little more than a spiritual fungus.

The ardent desire of every Christian is that something more like the Kingdom of God may come to this weary earth. Every time we go to the altar, which represents the



## *Introduction*

Throne of God, and every time we kneel at the Communion Rail, which reminds us that "all are one in him," we take part in the world's most important drama: We act out tomorrow's world today! We demonstrate that the new society we would have on earth must have its roots deep in the corporate worship of God and that true brotherhood depends utterly on our fellowship with Him.



## *This Means of Grace*



### The Collect for Purity

**A**LMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE GOD FROM WHOM WE CANNOT HIDE

TRAVELLERS in tropical lands often tell of malevolent little creatures called white ants. These insects take up their abode in wooden roofs and, with commendable zeal, begin eating the beams and the trusses from the inside outward. There comes a time when the whole structure, weakened by the persistent and voracious appetite of the insects, suddenly and without warning collapses. When a man's character collapses, it does so because he has for years harbored and nurtured within himself the little secret deceptions, the "inconsequential" moral lapses, the innumerable whitewashings of his conscience-voice. It is because he has too seldom held up before his soul the mirror of God which will give him a glimpse of his real self as God sees him.

*Christianity is a realistic religion.* It belongs to the stern realism of this Holy Communion service that we are at once and immediately faced with a God "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." Doubtless this statement is a strong offense to human pride, which would rather come to God on its own terms and insist that at heart it is not really bad or sinful but just wayward and thoughtless. But God

### *This Means of Grace*

will have none of such pollyannish philosophy. The opening bars of the Holy Communion, this sacred symphony, are charged with realism, for, if it is to help us, our approach to God must be objectively real. So much depends upon our right approach to God. The *Queen Mary*, on one of her peacetime voyages, came into New York harbor at a time when there was a strike of all the tug-boat hands. We know how these fussy little craft are wont to push and pull and coax the great liners to their berths and that few shipmasters would dare dock without the all-important tugs. But the master of the *Queen Mary* did dare to do so, and with consummate skill he so maneuvered the huge craft that it came safely to rest alongside the pier. This was one of the outstanding exploits of peacetime seamanship. It is so with our worship of God, for the approach to Him is all-important. This Collect for Purity is the sentry standing guard at the door of God's service, and the password to the worship of God is *Realistic Sincerity*. We cannot hide from God.

*This knowledge that He knows us is at once our shame and our opportunity.* It is our shame because not one of us would care to reveal all the secret thoughts and desires of our hearts even to our most sympathetic friends and loved ones. A well-known psychiatrist once said that he was continually amazed at the sewer-like thoughts and desires of even the most decent people with whom he dealt. It is also our opportunity, by which God can lay His cleansing hand upon our hearts.



*The God from Whom We Cannot Hide*

With all within me that I shrink from telling,  
I yet beneath thy piercing gaze can stand;  
Hold o'er me Lord for healing and for blessing,  
Thy piercèd hand.

—*Vespertide*

Some of the great evangelists of former years laid great stress on this truth that God knows our most secret thoughts; and with trenchant and sometimes with sulphurous imagery they told how God had an angel for every living person, and that that guardian angel's single task was to note down all the good and evil deeds of the one committed to his care. Our modern superfine sensibilities have rejected this as crude, which it is; but we have also rejected the truth which the teaching enshrined. And that truth is that the God who notes every sparrow's fall and who lights the lanterns of every star also knows what is in the heart of every man. One day He will ask for an accounting.

*God has his finger on the pulse of men.* Adam and Eve tried to hide from the Lord God in the Garden, and they were not highly successful—no more successful than are we when we try to hide our hearts from God. It is part of the genius of all great writers and dramatists that they have a finger on the pulse of people. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a great many novels, but of all his writings I dare say not one is better known than *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The curious thing about this story is that he had great difficulty in selling it to a publisher.

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They all thought it so very weird, so out of line with human experience, that nobody would think of reading it! But Stevenson had his finger on the pulse of people. He had produced a story which is more than a story, for it dramatizes that dual struggle which goes on in all our hearts, of which St. Paul speaks when he says on behalf of every man: "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." In far greater measure God has His finger on the pulse of humankind.

Nay, but thou knewest us Lord Christ, thou knowest,  
Well thou rememberest our feeble frame.  
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest,  
Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps we do have a few friends in life with whom we can, as we say, "be ourselves." And we mean by such a phrase that because we know them well and because they know us well there need be no pretense, or evasiveness, or pomp and circumstance in our dealings with them. It is a very comfortable thing to have such friends, for in much of our traffic with the world we must conceal our thoughts and hide our aching hearts. With these few friends we may sit down and talk out intimate problems without apology or fear of betrayal. But if we may do this with an earthly friend, then with how much more confidence may we approach this God to whom all hearts are open as the sky, who understands every human desire, and from whom man cannot hide!

<sup>1</sup> Myers, F. W. H., "St. Paul," from *Collected Poems*, New York: Longmans, Green. Used by permission.

## *The God from Whom We Cannot Hide*

The late G. K. Chesterton said that there had been many theories of baptism advanced in the course of the centuries, and that the various schools had their own peculiar theories as to the means of baptismal regeneration; but that, whatever the theory held concerning baptism, there was no doubt in anybody's mind that the human soul needed washing!

*The Gospel assures us that God CAN give our hearts the cleansing that the world cannot give.* Christ can cleanse us as He cleansed the man of long ago, who in the agony of his dread disease cried: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." The world lays its hand on us, and the contact soils. Jesus lays His hand on us, and the contact cleanses. Do you remember how, in Robert Browning's poem, *The Ring and the Book*, the girl-wife Pompilia says of her lecherous and wicked husband, Count Guido: "He laid a hand on me that burned all peace, all joy, all hope, and last all fear away." Lust and sin *do* soil. Jesus comes to lay His hand on us; and His is a hand of cleansing, a hand that drives our love of sin away and gives us peace within.

God is like an army, and an army cannot win a war by sitting still, only by taking the fight to the enemy. The heart of a man can be conquered by God only if that man will let Him in; for God will not come in except by invitation. In the picture, by Holman Hunt, of Jesus standing at the symbolic door of our hearts, the door has no handle outside. It must be opened from within. God is like

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that. When we really want God He comes, but most of the time we do not want Him very much and we do not want Him for very long. But when we want Him and ask Him in, then God sweeps away the foul stagnancies of our hearts with the torrent of his blest invasion, to make for us:

A heart in every thought renewed,  
And full of love divine,  
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
A copy, Lord, of thine!

—*Hymn 414*

You cannot clean a window with dirty water, and you cannot availingly praise God with a dirty heart. But a clean heart, a scavenged heart—that kind of heart can be lifted up to God in an approach to that perfect love which transcends all human affection, and in a sincerity of praise which worthily exalts His holy Name.

## The Decalogue

GOD spake these words, and said:

I am the LORD thy God; Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them;

for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and show mercy unto thousands in them that love me and keep my commandments.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy God in vain;

for the LORD will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work; thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and

earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Honour thy father and thy mother;

that thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt do no murder.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not steal.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.*

Thou shalt not covet.

thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

*Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.*

## CHAPTER II

### *THE NEGATIVE HAS ITS PLACE!*

**I**T IS SAID that the people of the middle ages lived under the tyranny of the Church; and "if it were so 'twas a grievous fault." It is more certain that the folk of the western world in the nineteenth century lived under the tyranny of the scientists; and more recently we have found ourselves somewhat bullied by our friends, the psychologists and psychiatrists, whose doctrinal differences are strangely reminiscent of the religious advertisements in a Los Angeles Saturday newspaper. Things got to such a pass a few years ago that we dared hardly venture outside the house without consulting one of our psychiatric friends, and we were quite sure that several members of the family, including ourselves, needed their expert attention.

One of the dicta that our psychological friends have stressed has been what one might call "the religion of the positive mind." In all life activities, from bringing up the baby and bringing up father on the one hand to our social and business attempts to "make friends and influence people" on the other, we are commanded to take the "positive" point of view.

*The Ten Commandments, which have survived a series*

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*of civilizations, are largely a series of prohibitions*, quite negative in their emphases. They say quite often and quite plainly: "Thou shalt not." They were given to Moses by God in the long ago. Now Moses had no college degree, and his theory of dreams was doubtless not Freudian but the orthodox view of his day; and the Ten Commandments are all couched in the negative with the exception of two! Thou shalt not is the sustained theme of the Decalogue, in contra-distinction to the "positive" approach to life.

The Decalogue is a series of quite simple statements, and therein lies one reason for its long life. The simple person with a relatively low intelligence can readily understand its commands and translate them into his everyday experience. It is one of the curious manifestations of modern life that anything simple is underrated and anything complicated is revered. One does not expect a coloratura soprano named Mary Ann Brown to get very far in her profession, whereas a Madame de Sponzola has the scales tipped in her favor, usually in two senses, from the first high C she sends into the cringing air. Books which are supposed to deal with ethics and morals are as complicated as a tariff table and a great deal less definite. Like a cafeteria, they offer a wide variety of choices in the realms of morals and ethics and a minimum of plain directions for the ordinary human being. A reliable traveler reports that a sign at the express office in a Chinese railroad station vouchsafed the following in-



### *The Negative Has Its Place!*

formation: "Leave your baggage with us and we will send it in all directions." The non-Christian humanistic moralists who get such large sums of money for writing popular directions for human conduct are just about as coherent as that Chinese sign, and fully as helpful.

*The negative side of life is very much with us.* Those well-meaning intelligentsia, and they who follow in their train, frequently object to the use of "thou shalt not" in education. Such persons must remain deliberately blind to the many negatives with which we have to live; for the whole system of man-made law is replete with negations. "Thou shalt not park thy car here" obviates the construction of signs reading: "The Park Board confidently expects that any and all automobile owners will park elsewhere." It is generally much simpler and more effective to put up a sign reading "No Hunting Here" than to issue a general invitation by means of a positive sign inviting all people with guns to go to the next township. I seem to recollect that a great many statutes and ordinances begin with the words: "It shall be unlawful to . . . No person shall . . ." etc. There is a positive propriety about prohibitions that can neither be ignored nor denied. In addition, it is a remarkably simple and effective means of keeping society in order until it learns a higher law.

It seems particularly needful to stress the thou-shalt-nots in a day when so many people live under the tyranny of the relative point of view. I have read that not more than a dozen people now living really understand

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what Mr. Albert Einstein has in mind when he speaks of relativism, but this fact has not prevented an alarming number of amateur Einsteins from concluding that there are no positive moral and ethical and religious values. They bleat endlessly that "all things are relative" and think that they have said something very profound. To such, the Decalogue comes with simple suddenness and says that idolatry and thievery, lying and covetousness, and lust and the desecration of holy things are just that in every age. They are the sins of every century that afflict humankind, and he reads history with a mind polarized against the obvious who does not see this simple truth.

*God is a God of standards, and therefore a God of law.* His universe is made that way, and the laws of the universe are the laws of the God who made them, and who made "all things visible and invisible." It follows that the breaking of every law of God exacts its own penalty, whether it be the breaking of the law of gravitation or of the law of truth. The many generations which have followed the giving of the Law to Moses on the Mount have completely substantiated the Decalogue as a series of sound principles for human living; and while it is true that our Lord added His own word to the Ten Commandments, yet in doing so He did not abrogate their wisdom for us who are called by His great Name. He said: "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil."

We should not normally expect a person to get much benefit from a college course without first attending high

## *The Negative Has Its Place!*

school; for the latter is the necessary preliminary to the former. It is just so with the Ten Commandments; they form the necessary groundwork we must have before graduating to the higher law of love which Jesus came to bring.

*There is a distinctly Christian interpretation of the Decalogue.* Because we are Christians, we face the obvious fact that we cannot be content with following the Decalogue in the manner that would have been satisfactory to an Israelite in the camp of Moses long ago. We live on the other side of the watershed of history, in that dispensation which has as its great inheritance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was enough for an ancient Hebrew to live up to the laws of Moses; in doing so he was many spiritual levels above the people of the surrounding tribes. But that standard is not enough for us; it is but the beginning. The same laws are true, but they carry with them a greater obligation and a far higher standard. Three thousand years ago it was a good thing to love one's neighbor and to hate one's enemy, but Jesus lifts this whole commandment to a new level when He declares that, for the Christian, enemies are to be loved into friendship.

From this new point of view the second commandment against idolatry is not fulfilled if we decline to worship an idol of wood or stone; for few if any of us are exposed to that temptation today! It was a live temptation for the Israelites, but is not for us. We have our own idols which we put in the place of God and Christ, before

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which we make our daily obeisance. Christ is either Lord of all our lives or else He is not Lord at all for us; and the egocentricity which leaves Him out, the plans for life in which He has no part, the desires which He cannot share, the strivings which are not hallowed by His cross—these are our contemporary idolatries. To perceive this wrings from our hearts a genuine cry: "Lord have mercy upon us."

Pardon our offences,  
Loose our captive chains,  
Break down ev'ry idol  
Which our soul detains.

—*Hymn 358*

It is so with the other commandments, for Christ is not satisfied with mere legal obedience. He asks that we place against each commandment His measuring rod, which is to regard wrong desire as if it had been action. To be angry with another without just cause, and to cultivate that anger is, in His sight, to commit murder; for He says that murder springs from the same root as anger. To harbor impure thoughts toward another human being is by Christ's standards the equivalent of committing adultery; for again He regards the desire as if it had been action. To covet the goods of another, or to withhold one's own goods to the detriment of the Kingdom of God, is plain stealing in His sight; for He regards the desire as if it had been action.

There are sets of simple rules in every trade and profes-

### *The Negative Has Its Place!*

sion, and although they may seem absurdly simple, they are yet the garnered wisdom of the years; to ignore them often spells disaster. The God of Moses is not dead, but still speaks, and the wisdom He revealed on Sinai is fulfilled, not negated, by what happened on Calvary. It is a profounder wisdom than is generally conceded that cries out: "Lord have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee."



## The Summary of the Law

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith.

**T**HOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.





### CHAPTER III

#### *THE BINARY COMMAND OF JESUS*

THERE ARE PROBABLY many penalties attached to being famous besides the inevitable misunderstanding which accrues during the lifetime of a famous person. That in itself would be bad enough, but misunderstanding and misinterpretation tend to continue in perpetuity. We are not at all averse to joining in fulsome praise of famous men and those heroes that begat us, but it is another thing to try to discover their message, to know what they were driving at, and to take their message into our own hearts. Everyone, I suppose, concedes that Dante was a matchless poet with more than a touch of genius about him. We all agree that Shakespeare did an unusually good job with plays and sonnets. But most of us have not the ghost of an idea of Dante's message because we have not read him; and those works of Shakespeare we have read were done under the stern compulsion of "required reading." Because our Saviour's message is so much greater than all the messages of mankind put together, He suffers even more at the hands of those who tip their hats to His greatness and yet have not the slightest notion of what He taught or the desire to pattern their lives by His Gospel!

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*The Gospel is not loving either God or our neighbor, but it is loving both God and our neighbor.* In the latter days of the nineteenth century when any theory of evolution was still much under fire from the fundamentalists, a certain conservative clergyman, catching sight of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in a book store, thumped the offending volume with his fist and told the clerk: "There is a book I have drubbed hard and often from my pulpit; and thank God, I've not read a line of it!" Both the Gospel of Jesus and the subsidiary teachings of the Church are today the victims of an amazing illiteracy on the part of so-called educated people. It is not uncommon to meet men and women in professional life whose acquaintance with the Gospel is confined to a vague idea that the golden rule is a good idea as long as one does not carry it too far! This vagueness, begotten of ignorance about the rudiments of Christianity, was well-illustrated a few years ago in a publicity release about the New York World's Fair. It stated that among the attractions there was to be erected on the grounds a "non-sectarian temple . . . which no religious body will be allowed to use." The temple was to be entirely empty except for a carillon and two organs—indicative we suppose of the general uncertainty about things religious in our great democracy, or perhaps only in our great metropolis!

Our Saviour had to deal in His lifetime with a group of professionally religious people who began, continued, and ended their religious lives with the idea that formal

## *The Binary Command of Jesus*

obedience to the Law was sufficient for salvation in this world and in the next. They were good people in the conventional sense of the word, they said their prayers, went to church, and tithed their incomes for religious and charitable purposes. And doubtless among their numbers were many who really loved God in a personal and truly pious way. There are many like them today who are so devoted to their personal relationship with God that they are blind to the plain fact that the Christian faith is, in its deepest sense, social. He that loves God must love his brother also.

Or take the second half of Christ's Law: an extraordinary number of people erase the first part of the Summary of the Law from their minds and think that Christianity consists in loving one's neighbor. This is not the Gospel but a low-grade and uninspired humanism.

It should be clear by now that the world will not be saved either by individualistic piety divorced from society, or by a godless sociological program, no matter how intelligently worked out the latter may be. It is not a question of either personal piety or a social program, but rather personal piety *and* a social program. The two things go together and are inseparable, as our Saviour said: "On these *two* commandments hang all the law and the prophets." You do not have a choice in the Christian life, between personal religion or a program of social amelioration; it is not "either or" but "both and."

*God is a God who makes total claims on men. "Thou*

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shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Any intellectual ancient Greek would have been ashamed to state so simple a proposition; for our Lord does not say: "Thou shalt admire, thou shalt understand, thou shalt fear, thou shalt accept, thou shalt appreciate." He says: "Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God." The Greeks made religion an intellectual business, and the Romans made it part of the furniture of empire; but Christ centers religion in an emotion, in that noetic experience we call love. In more ways than one our world of today has embraced the errors of the Greek world, with its exaggerated worship of the intellect and its deification of the human body. The whole secular theory of education is at long last under suspicion, for we have observed that several generations of godless intellectuals have been unable to bring about the transformation of society. The real reason for the failure is that godless intellectuals love themselves and not God. It is one of the greatest strengths in our holy religion that we have, in Jesus Christ our Lord, a Person whom we can love. For ours is the religion of a Person, although it is not only a personal religion. For in Him "dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily." We know that love is the greatest binding, transforming, creative force in the world, and that no other force can stand against it; for that is the way in which God's universe is made. And that is why God founded the Christian faith on love.

## *The Binary Command of Jesus*

God makes total claims on man. That should not be a strange thought to us these days when the word *totalitarianism* is bandied around in almost every group conversation. We know what that word means in a political sense, for we have lived in those years when some countries gave up their freedom, and abdicated some of those precious rights won for them by the life-blood of stalwart men in days gone by. Some have offered up themselves, their souls and bodies, to the service of a state which claims to be all-sufficient and whose lightest wish is law for all its subjects. The world for many a millennia has been plagued with the divine rights of individuals and conquerors, of kings and potentates, of countries and states and empires. God has always had to compete with His created beings for allegiance.

*God makes total claims on us.* Let there be no mistake about it. He does not ask, and He refuses to be satisfied with, a part of ourselves; He wants our total beings; He wants us to say from our inmost hearts:

All we have we offer;  
All we hope to be,  
Body, soul and spirit,  
All we yield to thee.

—Hymn 580

There is a story told of Anglo-Saxon days in Britain, when the early missionaries were surrounded in that land by a people largely heathen. An important chieftain had, after great persuasion, agreed to accept the Christian faith and

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be baptized. Certain Christian groups will find cause for rejoicing that in those days they used large baptismal fonts capable of immersing the whole body. It was observed that in the act of baptism the chief submitted to immersion but held his right arm out of the water. Asked by the priest why he did so, the chief replied with childlike candor: "I must hold back my good right arm to slay my enemies." It is this reserving of certain parts of ourselves from God which wreaks such havoc with our attempts at the Christian life; for God must be Lord of our whole lives or else He is not Lord at all.

*Thou shalt love Him with all thy heart.* It is often observed that failure in a business or profession attends a person not because he is insufficiently equipped mentally or physically for his task. Despite his gifts, we see that there is something wrong, and we say with truth: "His heart is not in his work." And if our hearts are not in our work there creeps in that restlessness, that disintegrated effort, which spells disaster. One suspects that here is a reason why so many marriages go on the rocks; the heart of one or both of the partners is not in the marriage.

I am aware that it is considered old-fashioned to talk about the heart as being the center of the emotional life, and that we have invented other and longer words to describe that part which has to do with the center of our personalities. But the word *heart* is a simple word, and when God says: "Give me thy heart," we know what He means.

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God says: "*Give me thy soul.*" All of it. We are not satisfied with a mechanistic view of the universe or with a mechanistic view of man, no matter how clever such explanations may be. We know that we are something more than the sum of our physical and mental parts, more than a dollar's worth of chemicals, powered by a little electrical energy. Man is more than these. There is in him that subtle and unique combination which makes him a particular being, a *person* in the root sense of that word. It is that something which defies all the measurements of science that we call the individual human soul. We hear a great deal in these days about bombers and bombing. The modern bombing plane is an amazing example of man's devilish ingenuity. Equipped with several tons of bombs, it can fly thousands of miles to its target and home again. And yet the flying giant is not efficient for its mission unless it be provided with the essential bomb-sight, by means of which precise bombing is achieved. Take that one part out and the machine is not efficient for the specific purpose for which it was made. It is so with the soul of man and its relationship to God. God wants and demands all of a man's personality and not a part of it. To offer him a part and to withhold even a small part of ourselves is the one great reason why we do not grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*"Love me with all thy mind," says God.* Love is a word with very special meaning for today. A system of educa-

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tion which has flouted God openly, which glories in the fact that it has no integrating principle and needs none; a system which attempts to put the Christian faith on a dissecting tray with the idea that it is studying Christianity—this is a system which has deliberately withheld from God the souls of men. In spite of all the storm signals, there are still many educationalists who prefer agnostic intelligence to moral character. They miss the fact that “civilization is Christian, and that when it ceases to be Christian it ceases to be civilization.” With God it is all or nothing, and He makes a total claim. It is only when we, like the disciples of old, present Him with our selves, our souls and bodies in their totality, that we set in motion the tidal wave of the grace of God in us.

*“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” There can be no effective, continuing and optimistic sociology except it be motivated by the first and great commandment. That sad disillusionment with human nature so often observed in social workers is nothing less than the inevitable result of reversing the commandments of God, of mixing up the words He spoke, of emasculating the two-fold command. We understand that in making a successful cake one should cream the butter and sugar first, and that if one starts off by mixing flour and milk and adding the butter and sugar afterward, the result is culinary disaster! There are too many people mixing up the flour and milk of social



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relations first before they cream the butter and sugar of the Christian message. No wonder society's cake turns out insipid and underdone!

There are some persons who think that the command to "love one's neighbour as oneself" is merely "higher selfishness," whatever that phrase may mean. But one thing is clear—that it is both good Christianity and also good common sense. To extend the same regard to others that we extend ourselves is not an orchidaceous addition to the Christian's life but an essential of that life. To put it bluntly, we dare not live otherwise than by this rule.

Since that day when our Saviour first told the story of the Good Samaritan there has been no doubt in the minds of Christians as to the global implications of the Gospel; for the Gospel is not patient of any other than a global outlook. Herein lies one of the great justifications for the tremendous claims of Christ for His Gospel. If one thing is clear today it is that while the world is now a neighborhood it has not yet become fully aware of the fact. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" is an indictment against the exploitation of any man or woman anywhere in the world at any time and for any reason whatsoever. It is in general much easier to love *in absentia* some African tribe which we have not seen than to stretch out a brotherly hand to the Pullman porter or the Negro who shines our shoes. Yet for all the tremendous problems in race relations one thing we know, and that is that our Saviour countenanced no racial distinctions,

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whatever His followers may do. "For all are one in thee and all are thine" was never in doubt as a primary article of the Faith. This attitude has often been dismissed as a counsel of perfection and therefore unworkable in the practical affairs of life. It seems highly doubtful if any other basic attitude can possibly bring about a better world.

*"Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith."* Earnest Christians may take His orders seriously, but there are others who question whether the ultimate in moral teaching and ethical precept came once and for all almost two millennia ago. They do not doubt the beauty and idealism of His sayings, but they do question the ultimate and final authority of His word. Yet in art there is no law of progression through the years, and what is true for art could be true also for religion. As Rodin, the great French sculptor, once said: "In the sphere of character man will never advance beyond Jesus of Nazareth." That is why He speaks to us today, with ultimate authority and with a prestige that is final.

### The Collect for Direction

**O** ALMIGHTY Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that, through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



## CHAPTER IV

### *WITHOUT THY GUIDING HAND WE GO ASTRAY*

*A*S LIFE GOES ON it becomes more evident that, left to ourselves and to our own initiative, we come increasingly short of the standard set for us by God in Christ. The ardent idealism of youth settles down to the resigned acceptance of middle age. Without the pinpricks of the Spirit and without the help of God, we shall not live up to God's laws; neither shall we pray:

Lead us, O Father in the paths of peace;  
Without thy guiding hand we go astray,  
And doubts appall and sorrows still increase;  
Lead us through Christ, the true and living way.

—*Hymn 433*

This Collect for Direction gives a realistic view of our relationship to the commands of God and of Christ. Of course these commands are hard to fulfil, and many of them seem well-nigh impossible of fulfilment. By ourselves we stand not the ghost of a chance of living in the ways of God or of doing His will. But God, the God whom Christians worship, is an almighty God, able and willing to do all things for us if we want them done.

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Against our temporal and transitory state this collect rightly sets the eternity and power of God who is from everlasting to everlasting, and with whom a thousand years are but as a watch in the night.

*There is no guide in life like God.* That growth in grace which we all secretly covet comes from letting God take control over more and more areas of our lives. Life becomes a series of invasions of the Holy Spirit which penetrate the soul with ever deeper and more lasting effects. That surefooted certainty with which the saints move among men comes from their increasing conviction that God controls the life within the temporary habiliments of their bodies. In setting a course at sea, it is quite important that the direction be exactly right, for a small error at the beginning of the voyage becomes a great one after the ship has sailed several hundred miles. The direction in which our lives move is of similar importance, and it will be the right direction only if God plans and directs the course. This collect asks that God "direct, sanctify and govern" our lives for us; for He is a better guide and a far safer director than man's best wisdom.

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
Hold me with thy powerful hand.

—*Hymn 434*

We ask that God take over the sanctifying of our lives,

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and that means we ask Him to make us holy. It is a pity that some words in our language come to have such limited meanings, and that fate seems to have descended upon this word *holy*. It has come to be synonymous with that dour and brittle piety often ascribed to Calvinistic protestantism. Perhaps the best modern word which is a synonym for holy or for sanctified is *integrated*. The integrated personality is a unity, a harmony, and not a heterogeneous collection of conflicting desires and emotions. God in Christ is the great integrator of personality. Just as particles of iron cluster around a magnet, so Christ is the one who provides that center around which every part of our human personalities can cluster and find meaning for itself.

The story of Charlemagne is a thrilling one, for he spent many decades subduing the various parts of his fractious kingdoms. Hither and yon he went with his armies, until finally all the tribes acknowledged the sovereignty of the great emperor, and all were brought under his sway. The story is parabolic of the part that Christ must play in our lives, where every emotion, every desire, every aspiration must not be left autonomous but be tied up and integrated into Him.

*We ask Him to "direct, sanctify, and govern" us.* It is the function of a mechanical governor to keep the machine moving smoothly. I well remember that as a boy I used to see a certain sawmill in operation. It was a simple affair, and the motive power was supplied by a stationary

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steam engine. But what fascinated me most was the centrifugal governor which kept constant control over the speed of the engine and prevented it from delivering erratic power. So does God act on us if we accept His governance. For His stabilizing guidance gives freedom from that erraticism which is one of the curses of this age. He gives balance to personality in a day when so many people seem out of balance. He gives serenity in a time when chaos seems to reign. He gives the stability of an integrated life when all about us seems to be flying apart. History is starred with the lives of those who have given themselves over to the directive, sanctifying, and governing power of God. They have presented society with the nearest approach to a harmonious personality that this world, with the single exception, has ever witnessed. This is what happens when God is at the wheel of our lives, when we let Him take control.

*We plead for this harmony, this integration of ourselves, for both "our hearts and our bodies."* For the Christian religion will not be maneuvered into being merely a cult of the body beautiful. Beautiful bodies can be indwelt with hearts that are rotten to the core. Our Saviour said it was "out of the heart of man" that both good and evil flowed. The heart is the "major exchange" from whence come the messages that activate nervous system and musculature; from whence come, in other words, our actions. Deep students of human behavior insist that all human behavior is purposive, and that every action we perform



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is filled with meaning. Each act takes on its particular significance from the way it is shaped in our hearts.

Lead us, O Father, in the paths of right;  
Blindly we stumble when we walk alone,  
Involved in shadows of a darksome night;  
Only with thee we journey safely on.

—*Hymn 433*

The Christian faith is a highway map with the road clearly marked with all essential signs. Quite often opponents of the Christian faith accuse the followers of Christ of being narrow-minded, and this accusation is, of course, true. It is of the very essence of a road that it be long and narrow, for it would be quite illogical to build a road which spread itself all over the countryside! Just as the scholar must specialize to the detriment of other forms of knowledge, so must the Christian. Charles Darwin in his early life was an accomplished musician, but in later life he became tone deaf; he had given the years to biological studies, and through long disuse his musical gift had atrophied.

In traveling a highway, the skilled driver can, without conscious thought, select and read only those signs which have to do with the road. Other signs along the way may be larger and more attractive, but for a driver on the highway the roadsigns take precedence. It is so with traveling life in the "ways of God's laws"; the signs are already there and we can read them if we will.

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But it is not sufficient merely to read roadsigns and to do nothing whatever about them! Such an attitude would spell speedy disaster! And yet that is exactly what many people want to do about the Christian faith; they think that knowledge of the ways of God is enough. But it is not sufficient to know one's Bible from beginning to end, or to know the services of the Prayer Book by rote, or to perform all the outward and visible signs of corporate worship without a mistake. It has been well said that there are too many idealists in the world, and far too many ideals. One of the last words of nurse Edith Cavell before she was shot in the last war by the Germans was: "Patriotism is not enough." To change the sentence a bit one might say: "Idealism is not enough." There has to be some way of putting ideals into practise, or in the words of the collect, of using the "ways of his laws" to bring about the "works of his commandments."

One should count lost any service of corporate worship when the individual does not take some one of the ways of God's laws and determine by the grace of God to translate it into a "work of his commandments" some time during the ensuing week.

*God has promised His protection and preservation to us.* When St. Paul wanted to drive home to the Ephesians the thought that God did indeed protect His people, that He was in reality "keeping watch above his own" the apostle told them to put on the "whole armour of God." Perhaps the figure is not too helpful for today. But picture if you

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will a great convoy going across the broad Atlantic, with ships both great and small, fast and slow, old and newly built. Perhaps we may borrow this modern and grim figure and draw from it a spiritual lesson. The ships all go at the same pace, the pace of the slowest. They are, as we have said, of all kinds and belong to many different nations. They are traveling on a particular course, to an ultimate destination, but the voyage is complicated and many changes of course are necessary because of the enemy. Some ships will get damaged, and some will be sunk, and all will be in almost constant danger; but they will all be under the protection of airplanes above and warships on the sea. The thing that really matters is that the convoy gets through. What a parable that is of the Christian fellowship as it journeys on toward its final goal!

Oft in danger, oft in woe,  
Onward, Christians, onward go;  
Fight the fight, maintain the strife,  
Strength'ned with the Bread of Life.  
—*Hymn 558*

God will protect us, God does protect us, and underneath and around us and above us are the everlasting arms! Of very necessity life cannot but be hazardous, and we dare not ask for "flowery beds of ease," but only the knowledge that God will abide with His own. We ask that He will be with us always and that we may feel Him ever near.

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Not a brief glance, I beg, a passing word,  
But as thou dwell'st with thy disciples Lord,  
Familiar, condescending, patient, free,  
Come, not to sojourn, but abide with me.<sup>1</sup>

—*Hymn 467*

It is that kind of protection that “both here and ever” will “preserve us both in body and soul.” We need not think of this preservation as a kind of pickling process, akin to embalming, although we do meet with Christians who seem to be in that particular state of suspended animation. What we are asking for here is that God will keep intact in us those moral and ethical foundations upon which our Christian characters rest and through which they must grow. We know, for we have seen too many times the slow wrecking of a personality; we have seen the timbers of the soul decay, and the whole precious structure collapse. We have seen the little veracities of life undermined and rotten. We know what sin can do. We know, too, that strong preservative which is the grace of God in us; and we know that as long as that can be kept in us, more stately mansions of the soul will be reared in confidence and in strength.

With His hand to guide us we shall not go far astray.

<sup>1</sup> This verse is from the original text.

The Collect  
The Epistle  
and  
The Gospel of the Day



## CHAPTER V

### *THE LAMP THOU GAV'ST TO GUIDE*

ONCE WAS CONFRONTED by a rather militant female of uncertain age who belonged to a particular brand of Christianity known as "The Bible Church." In addition to holding forth on the inestimable advantages of her own special form of religion and its scriptural nature, she injected into her declamation the idea that the Episcopal Church was so busy "bowing and scraping" that it had forgotten its Bible! To argue such a matter before so fierce a lady would be, if not unchristian, at least unwise; but I was interested enough in the charge to go home and study anew the Prayer Book. I found it redolent with Scripture from beginning to end; and far from belonging to a Church which has neglected the Bible, I concluded that the Prayer Book had more verses of Holy Writ in its services than do the services of any other Christian group!

*The lamp of Holy Scripture is our sufficient guide in life.* The chief object of any service of Christian worship is to present Jesus Christ to men. If we come away from church without a clear picture of Jesus, then that service has for us failed in its primary object. There were certain Greeks which came to the disciples in days of old and

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said to them: "Sirs, we would see Jesus." That is the inchoate cry that wells up from every congregation to their leader: "Show us something more of His personality, of His ways, of His thoughts. Light up for us the things He did and the way He did them. Sirs, we would see Jesus!" There can be no better way to show our Saviour to worshipers than to read His Holy Word in their hearing.

We love thy holy word,  
The lamp thou gav'st to guide  
All wand'ers home, O Lord,  
Home to their Father's side.

—*Hymn 398*

There is a place, and a large place, for our private study of Holy Writ; and the private study may be of two kinds: the scientific research into specific problems dealing with origins and historical backgrounds; and the reverent research of the simple Christian student who reads in order to grow in grace. But if the Church is to know the Word of God, the Bible must be read aloud in church at every service of public worship. There is a profound difference between the private study of the Bible and its public reading: for the public reading of the Word of God becomes a great act where the Christian fellowship listens to that Word for mankind. The reading of the Bible in the native tongue has always been the glory of the Anglican Churches since its practise in England guaranteed the success of the Reformation. Certainly the best-known



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speech made by any American orator is the Gettysburg Address of President Lincoln. Yet, superb as it is intrinsically, the tremendous implications of it grow each time it is recited solemnly in public. One could think there might be more loyal Americans today if the Constitution were recited at regular intervals in our public schools instead of receiving the cavalier treatment accorded it in many history courses.

The Church takes the position that certain parts of Holy Writ are more useful to the average Christian than other sections; and, in accordance with that theory, it selects the most important parts of the Gospels and Epistles for solemn reading at the Holy Eucharist service, as well as at other times. It is probable that some few alterations are in order, but, if the average Christian listens to epistle and gospel throughout the Church Year, that person will have more than a hazy idea as to what the Gospel is. Unfortunately we have but ten selections from the Old Testament. Of the New Testament, the Acts and most of the Epistles are represented. Altogether, we have ninety-three selections from the New Testament exclusive of the Gospels. When we come to the latter we have thirty-eight readings from St. Matthew, six from St. Mark, thirty-three from St. Luke, and twenty-seven from the gospel of St. John; a total of one hundred and four selections which together comprise the heart of the Gospel of Our Lord. If all of the Bibles in the world were destroyed, these epistles and gospels for the Church

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Year would supply us with the heart of Christ's message. They would together provide us with a lamp sufficient for us to find our way in the darkness.

*The reading of the Bible in public gives us a truly liberal education.* One could write a book, and a thick one, on the momentous influence of the Bible on civilization; and doubtless such books have been written. A single illustration will suffice: One of the great Christian writers of all time was John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is more than likely that Bunyan had never read any book other than the Bible, and yet he produced one of the most notable books in the whole of English literature! Poets, painters, architects, sculptors, and writers witness their incalculable debt to the Bible. To know the Bible is to possess a culture real and enduring. Queen Victoria spoke a true word when she said the Bible was the greatest single cause of England's greatness

It was not until modern times that scientists could calculate the distance from the earth to any of the stars. The reason for that failure lay in the fact that they could not get a base-line long enough to be of use. It was only when the distance from the earth to the sun was known that a sufficiently long base-line was available for measuring the distance from the earth to some of the nearer stars. The Bible does this for us in a religious sense, for it takes us out of the earthbound and limited horizons of the world and hints of God's horizons and the ways of heaven.

*The Bible is a book of patience.* To an impatient age

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the Bible speaks with majestic calm about the God of patience. It tells how age after age and in every generation God spoke to men through His chosen instruments, declaring His love and forgiveness and goodwill. Even before those days, in those incredulously long, uncharted aeons before man appeared, in the grotesque times of primeval life, and in the dim twilight of man's stumbling infancy, the God of patience was working His purpose out as year succeeded to year.

Glory to him who from the mire,  
In patient length of days,  
Elaborated into life  
A people to his praise.<sup>1</sup>

If we are tempted to wonder oftentimes at the slowness with which God's Kingdom comes, the Bible calls again to mind the wonderful patience of Almighty God, who has kept at His plan through the age-long millennia, in the face of unnumbered disappointments, and despite every blasted hope.

*The Bible is a book of consolation*, and it brings a consoling message in a day when man desperately needs a consolation free from that sentimentality which is the "mildew of the human intellect." There is a tremendous realism about the Bible, and its realistic appraisal of man speaks with peculiar potency today. The Bible gives a view of life which is neither fatalistic nor flighty; it sets

<sup>1</sup> Newman, John Henry, *The Dream of Gerontius*, New York: Longmans, Green. Used by permission.

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forth its multitude of characters—kings, commoners, poets, shepherds, prophets, and priests—without malice or muckraking and yet with sternest realism. The Bible plumbs the depths of the evil that is in man, and it reveals the glorious heights to which he can at times ascend. The deeds of its great heroes of the Old Testament, Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon, are depicted, both good and bad, and without any attempt to hide either part of their characters. In the New Testament, St. Peter, who easily might have become a plaster saint, betrays Jesus before a serving maid; St. Paul loses his temper and quarrels with St. Barnabas; and the Twelve Disciples show their childishness by squabbling over which of them was most important!

Yet in spite of its stern realism, or rather because of it, the Bible is the Book of Consolation. It meets all the deepest needs of man, and not just some of them. It shows Job and Jeremiah and Amos and Hosea answering the persistent questions about God and man. It sets forth the incomparable gospel of our Saviour and shows how He triumphed over the last enemy of man, which is death. It tells the undying story of the infant Church of Christ going forth into an enemy world conquering and to conquer. The whole consoling message is that God will never forsake His own.

The soul that to Jesus hath fled for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;

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That soul, though all hell shall endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no, never forsake.

—Hymn 564

The Bible asserts the experience of the human race for many centuries when it says that God will always be with us if we invite Him into our lives. There is no sorrow that He will not share, and in the sharing lighten our burden. There is no sin too black, too gross, too bestial for which man cannot repent and find God's peace.

*The Bible is the Book of Hope.* It can and does take man at his awful worst and at his blessed best, and say that there is hope for him. It says that man is more than his deeds, be they evil or good. The Bible declares firmly and insistently that men, potentially at least, are sons and daughters of the Living God who made them one and all. He is their Father whether they ever claim that relationship or not. The Bible says that until you see history as a chain of events with a purpose behind them; until you see the indelible mark of God through history, working His purpose out as year succeeds to year; until you perceive and know that all things work together for good to them that love God; until you know these things you have not the ghost of an idea as to what life means! God made man in His own image, for His own glory; and the true end of man and the only meaning behind history is that man redeemed by Jesus Christ will find his everlasting home with God.

Perhaps the greatest enemy we face today is not our

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fleshly enemy but our ghostly one. In these days when human perfidy has reached far below the dregs, when honor and plighted word and promise have been made to serve expediency, the very grave danger is that we shall doubt all human values, and renounce them all in one great gesture of despair. To put it bluntly, the gospel of the Son of God and the love of God seem too good to be true against such a backdrop of world hate and self-destruction. Yet the grace of God in Christ *is* true, and the unforgivable sin is the sin of despair.

Can it be true the grace He is declaring?

Oh, let us trust Him for His words are fair!

Man, what is this and why art thou despairing?

God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.<sup>2</sup>

You cannot hear the Bible read Sunday after Sunday without catching the joyance, the up-welling, surging hope that rings in all its pages, because it was written for our learning, that "through patience and comfort of the scriptures we might have hope."

The child who experiments with water colors knows that as pigments are mixed together the resultant color becomes progressively darker, and that if one mixes all the colors together a dark gray results. But with the properties of light the process is reversed. If the red light of the spectrum is added to orange the result is brighter light; if red and orange light are added to yellow, the result is still brighter light. If all of the seven colors of the

<sup>2</sup> Myers, *op. cit.*

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spectrum are superimposed on each other the result is the brightest light of all—white light. The Bible in its progressive revelation of God is the lamp He gave to guide us on our earthly journey. It is sufficient light for the way.





## The Nicene Creed

**I** BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God; Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God; Begotten, not made; Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made: Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man: And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried: And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures: And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father: And he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the Prophets: And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins: And I look for the Resurrection of the dead: And the Life of the world to come. *Amen.*



## CHAPTER VI

### OUR GLORIOUS AFFIRMATIONS!

**H**ERE IN THE CREED is the only time that the word *I* occurs in the Holy Eucharist, and even here we use the word as individuals *in* the Holy Fellowship. Someone has pointed out that the letter *I* comes very significantly in the very middle of *society*, thus expressing our inevitable relationship as individuals to our fellows. There are many people calling themselves Christians who do not like the creeds and who say they prefer their religion without any dogma. What they really mean is that they want the "fruits of the Christian conscience without the Christian system of belief." If we are going to make a serious and life-long effort to follow Christ we might as well make up our minds that we shall have to deal with a concerted effort on the part of many to water down the Faith. The resultant religion, if it can be dignified by such a word, will thus become conveniently vague. We read some time ago about an estimable and well-known woman who made a speech at a big meeting of the YWCA. She said *Y* stood for youth, which was pretty obvious; that *W* stood for wisdom, which was admirable; and that *A* stood for alertness, which is doubtless advisable. But she made the *C* stand for charity, which

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is both absurd and indicative of that peculiar attitude which tries to take down our Lord from His singular position in Christianity and still call the result by His Name!

It is a very good thing to understand that we start off by saying "I believe" and that we do not say "I understand" or "I know!" We make an act of faith, although an act of faith is popularly supposed to be something very much less intelligent than an act of the reason. In some strange manner, reason and not faith is presumed to be the highest function of the human personality; although reason is nothing but a regulative mechanism and has no power to create anything from its own energies. In all the great advances of the human mind, faith is that creative energy, and reason's function is to rationalize that faith. The regulative function of reason is then clearly subsidiary to the creative function of faith.

The Creed has a binding authority upon us who are members of the Church, and we are asked to believe in it without reservations. It is passing strange how the meaning of words gets mixed up in the popular mind, and this confusion is evident concerning this word *authority*. Archbishop William Temple has rightly pointed out that authority is popularly but wrongly identified with compulsion. The Church has the authority to state its Faith clearly and plainly, but of course it has no right or wish to compel any man to accept that faith. The authority of the Church is not arbitrary; for the authority is the outcome of experience, and every article of the Creed is the

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outcome of the experience of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit of God. There is no way of passing along these experiences except by embodying them in a series of statements such as we have in the Creed.

The great practical advantage in having the Creed is that it sets forth the Faith in outline. Just as we can see the contents of a book by looking over the table of contents and the chapter headings, so a recital of the Creed outlines for us the Faith of the Church. The Christian faith is not what I think it is, but what the Church says it is. The Church looks back to "a unique creative period in its history," embracing the days of the Gospels, the Epistles, and the post-apostolic writings, to get the facts and to preserve them for future generations. That is why the Creeds were framed, and that is why they are so practical and so useful in preserving the central doctrines of the Apostolic Faith.

It is not our purpose to dissect the Creed, but to emphasize that it is a series of glorious affirmations which have welled up from the experience of the living Church. "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible" is something more than a declaration; it is a great Gretchaninoff gloria of praise.

*Of course I believe in God!* And it seems absurd that some people spend so much of their lives keeping what they are pleased to call an "open mind" on the subject. There are many things in life that one must take for

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granted, and God is the first of these. You cannot keep an open mind about the existence of God and make any progress in the Christian Faith, or in any other faith for that matter. Mr. G. K. Chesterton once said that "the only purpose of opening one's mind is to shut it at the proper time."<sup>1</sup> It was Dr. William Eddy of Hobart College who warned us that the mind is like an oyster: If the oyster opens its mouth too wide and for too long, it dies!

I believe in God quite frankly because I do not see any other sensible way out. When a certain lady, in the presence of Thomas Carlyle, declaimed: "I accept the universe!" the sage of Chelsea muttered: "By Gad, she'd better!" To be an atheist and to deny the existence of any God at all is to join forces with a body of people who throughout human history have created nothing except chronic dyspepsia. That may be "progressive," but if so it is progress in the wrong direction and toward permanent spiritual acidosis. To be an agnostic is to join up with the Know Nothings and say "I do not know" to all of the problems that life hurls at us. Earthly examiners do not give even passing grades to those who hold themselves with such "modest stillness and humility."

Always to strive and yet never to come "to a knowledge of the truth" is not the mark of a Christian or of an adult mind. Sir James Barrie, the famous playwright, who once lived next door to H. G. Wells, used to remark: "Almost every evening through the walls I can hear Mr. Wells

<sup>1</sup> Chesterton, G. K., *Autobiography*, New York: Sheed and Ward. Used by permission.

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changing his mind!" You cannot build a healthy way of life on agnosticism, which in the last analysis is nothing less than a refusal to make up one's mind about anything of importance. Agnosticism begs every question except the trivial.

We cannot stop with belief in God, but we must go on to say in what kind of God we believe. It is in God who is "the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible." It is difficult to "warm up to" the god of many philosophers and psychiatrists, for their god is too impersonal to kindle anything but a formal respect. But our God is our Father, and we know that His fatherly love, self-forgetting, wholly-giving, entirely-loving, is the greatest love in the world. That kind of love, which seeks to save to the utmost, is set forth in form and words undying in the parable of the Prodigal Son. That is the kind of God our God is.

*But I must believe in Jesus Christ, too!* It is of more than passing significance that the Nicene Creed, which in English has two hundred and twenty-three words, devotes one hundred and thirty-one words to our Lord and the things concerning Him. To believe in God does not mark a man as a Christian. Jesus Christ demands that we come to a decision about Him. "But whom say ye that I am?" was not addressed alone to the disciples of long ago; it is addressed to everyone who wants the privilege of calling himself by His Name. A vague and fatuous belief in God does not entitle one to the Christian name; for the

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Devil himself, we are told, also believes in God; and with good reason! You have to decide about Jesus Christ to be a Christian, and this is what the Creed, in effect, says about Him: Some time in the reign of Herod the Great, there was One born in Palestine, who, about the age of thirty, spent somewhat less than three years of teaching and preaching, mostly in rural Galilee. This One, incurring the hatred of both Jewish and Roman authorities, was put to death during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. From this death He rose and went back to Heaven, where He is now at the right hand of the Father. There will come a time when this same Jesus will come again in judgment on all mankind, preparatory to setting up the New Kingdom, which shall have no end. That is what the Creed says about Him, that is the Church's decision concerning Jesus Christ.

Everything about the Gospel story tends to confirm this decision and to strengthen that faith. He alone, of all the great men whose lives shine as the light, stands out as The Light. Nothing He ever said needs to be unsaid, nothing He ever did calls for apology. And while it is true that the Gospels give us but an all too fleeting picture of our Saviour, they give us enough to show us a Person of incomparable beauty and a gospel worthy of the Son of God. Heartily I will reverence the great and good men of every race and clime and age. But before this One, and before Him only, will I fall down on my knees and say with St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God!"



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*"And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life."* When a man falls down on his knees in reverence to Jesus, he gets His accolade. It is the accolade of the Holy Spirit. "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and giver of life"; the Lord and Life-Giver explains better the last phrase. As the Revealer of all knowledge, as the life-long Companion of all those who believe in Jesus as Christ, and as the indwelling Agency in the Christian fellowship, the Holy Spirit is all these things. He it is who illuminates the mind of the physicist seeking in his laboratory to know more of the universe of God; for it is God's universe whether the physicist accepts that fact or not. It is the Holy Spirit who shows us the right things to do, and who gives us the grace and strength we ask to live "sober, righteous and godly lives."

*Our Creed ends with a fourfold affirmation:* I believe in "one Catholic and Apostolic church," that great Body indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, tied together through the centuries back to Jerusalem, and embracing all baptized persons to this present day; in "one Baptism for the remission of sins," for Christ Himself commanded this outward and visible sign of inclusion in the fellowship; in "the Resurrection of the dead," because the Captain of our Salvation rose from the grave, and like Him we too shall rise; and in "the life of the world to come," because He said that in His Father's house are many mansions. In His words are implicit the promise that God has prepared a place for them that love Him.

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Our American Declaration of Independence is one of the great blood-bought documents of human history. It rings with the glorious hard-won truths concerning human rights and freedom from the tyrannies of this world. Our Creed is a still more glorious affirmation, which declares that independence for the spirit of man comes only when man commits himself utterly and without reservation to a complete faith in God.

## The Offertory Sentences

**R**EMEMBER the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. *Acts* xx. 35.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. *St. Matt.* v. 16.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. *St. Matt.* vi. 19, 20.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. *St. Matt.* vii. 21.

He that soweth little shall reap little; and he that soweth plenteously shall reap plenteously. Let every man do according as he is disposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. *2 Cor.* ix. 6, 7.

While we have time, let us do good unto all men; and especially unto them that are of the household of faith. *Gal.* vi. 10.

God is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works, and labour that proceedeth of love; which love ye have showed for his Name's sake, who have ministered unto the saints, and yet do minister. *Heb.* vi. 10.

To do good, and to distribute, forget not; for with

such sacrifices God is well pleased. *Heb.* xiii. 16.

Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 1 *St. John* iii. 17.

Be merciful after thy power. If thou hast much, give plenteously; if thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little: for so gatherest thou thyself a good reward in the day of necessity. *Tobit* iv. 8, 9.

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. *St. Matt.* xxv. 40. ✓

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? *Rom.* x. 14, 15. ✓

Jesus said unto them, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into his harvest. *St. Luke* x. 2. ✓

Ye shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee. *Deut* xvi. 16, 17.

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

1 *Chron.* xxix. 11. ✓

All things come of thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee. 1 *Chron.* xxix. 14.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHEN IT IS MORE BLESSED TO RECEIVE

WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR, more or less, with the many jokes that continue to be made about church collections. Innumerable are the stories of the alms basin and of those who take up the offering! Nonetheless, the Offering is an integral, a necessary, and a very beautiful part of the service. For there are two things which happen, two outward and visible signs offered, by the people and by the priest on God's behalf, in return for which an "inward and spiritual grace" is given. The Offering is that collection of money to which we have already referred; and it is unfortunate that it has to be money and not goods. The money is the outward and visible sign of our own efforts and of our own time. The second portion of this part of the service is the Offertory, about which there is perhaps some confusion on the part of worshipers. The Anthem, which at this point provides strong competition for the cash offering, is no part of the Offertory but more often is used as a means of softening the strong metallic noises incident to the collection. This is evidently the reason choirs are often rated in proportion to the volume of music they produce.

*The money we offer is the outward and visible sign of*

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*the past week's labor.* It is a great pity that we have to bring money to church and that we are obliged to put it on the offering plate. It was so much more real when the Israelites of old brought their animals and turtle doves to the Temple sacrifice, or when the early Christians brought gifts in kind to the Holy Eucharist. The real value of money is seen only when one is living on an island devoid of money. The most worthless thing in the world is money, which so many people revere. Food, clothing, and shelter are the necessities of life, and money is nothing more than a symbol for buying things of real value which are food and clothing and shelter. Some of us have been in those contraptions called mazes, where the many devious paths placed between the entrance and the goal are so numerous and varied that we lose our way. That is quite like our world which has the "dollar sign" on so many things; we lose our sense of where the real value lie. As Dean W. R. Inge said long ago, Christ did not say that money was badly distributed but that it was over-valued.

The farmer who raises the wheat is so many steps away from the ultimate consumer of the bread. The wheat goes from farmer to elevator to mill to baker to wholesaler to retailer to consumer; and only then does the wheat emerge, a mere shadow of its former self, to be sure, into that horrid, wax-papery, insipid mixture which we call bread, and for which we pay money. Because so many people live away from the good earth, we have the very

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wrong impression that money and not wheat is the more important of the two. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Probably it is this warped point of view which makes the monetary offering of churches so inadequate and so unrepresentative of what the congregation could do if it had the mind. There is a well known hymn which begins with the words, "Holy offerings rich and rare." A few years of experience in the ministry will convince the average parson that the offerings may be "holy" in the sense that they are somewhat reluctantly "separated" from their former owners; and he will agree willingly that the word *rare* rather properly describes them. If there is one story in the Gospels that has been over-emphasized, it is the one concerning the widow who threw her two mites into the temple treasury. That happened to be all she had and she was not only giving her all but also she was also making a tremendous act of faith. The offering plates today too often show up the odd change thrown in with little thought, while we join in lustily in "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." It has been suggested that the first two lines of this hymn should be re-written:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
We'll keep them while we're here below!

It might be true that the road to hell will be found to be paved with good intentions, and that on closer inspection,

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the paving stones of that highway will be in the similitude of those five and ten cent pieces often thrown into the offering plate as a gratuity to God.

The crucial test of my faith in any political party, supposing that I am still able to believe in any, is my willingness to work for the party and to help finance its campaigns. The same acid test may be applied to myself and the Christian Church. If I believe in it I must help to support its campaigns as well as work for its success. The promise to follow Christ, which we make at Baptism and reiterate at Confirmation, is just such a promise of life-long support of Christ's campaign.

I think that we shall not see the importance of the symbolic offering we make to God in currency until we think of it in terms of our own weekly work. On behalf of the whole family one member usually works forty or more hours a week. Surely the provider himself and the whole family could set aside one hour of work every week for God and His Church! And I do not mean any hour, but one specific hour set apart each week when the whole family realizes that the provider for that family, and the rest of the members, is working and living that hour for God! Perhaps then we should give God an offering worthy both of ourselves and of Him who made all things and who has given us all that we possess.

That which the priest does during or after the Offertory Anthem is setting forth, in symbolic fashion, God's promise to us. We can always depend upon God, for He



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is neither fickle nor is He wayward. You remember that when the prodigal son repented, the Father saw the son while the prodigal was yet a great way off, and that he ran to meet him. It was Jesus who said: "Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down and running over."

For souls that of his own good life partake,  
He loves as his own self  
Dear as his eye, they are to him,  
He'll never them forsake.<sup>1</sup>

Bread and wine, just plain bread and wine! A child can understand and he who runs may read. These are the outward and visible signs of the Great Giver's gifts, food and drink, those twin necessities without which life would perish from the earth. These two elements contain within themselves the real meaning behind the money offering we give. We offer these to God, for they came from Him; and we ask Him to do something with them that we cannot do to them ourselves. We ask Him to consecrate them, to bless them, to invade them with the very Living Christ His only Son our Lord. Then we can take that bread which Presence makes His Body, and we can drink the wine that Indwelling makes His Holy Blood. These are God's gifts to us, the gifts we cannot get for ourselves, the gifts that only He can give.

If, as you see this Bread and this Wine offered at the

<sup>1</sup> Author unknown.

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altar, if you will say: "Lord, this is part of me, some of my labor, my life breath, my hopes and time and fears"; if you will ask Him to unite all these with His own self; if you will ask Him to give your gift and His gift back to you in blessed union, He will do it.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly thine,  
Till all this earthly part of me  
Glows with thy fire divine.

—*Hymn 375*

Jesus once said that it was more blessed to give than to receive; and that is true in most of life. But here in this offering which He makes us it is surely more blessed to receive than to give. Only one never receives until he gives! And God cannot give some things to us except He first receives the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies, in a sober righteous and godly life."

## The Prayer For the Whole State of Christ's Church

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who by thy holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks for all men; We humbly beseech thee most mercifully to accept our [*alms and*] oblations, and to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy Divine Majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the Universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant that all those who do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy Holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also, so to direct and dispose the hearts of all Christian Rulers, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion, and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all Bishops and other Ministers, that they may, both by their life and doctrine, set forth thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy Sacraments.

And to all thy People give thy heavenly grace; and especially to this congregation here present; that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear, and receive thy holy Word; truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

And we most humbly beseech thee, of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all those who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service, and to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE GLOBAL POINT OF VIEW*

SINCE ITS BEGINNING in Jerusalem the Church has always had to oppose those within its fellowship who preferred to localize the Christian gospel. It is a battle which is not yet won. There are few of us these days who do not keep for handy reference a globe or a map of the world; and we follow tensely the campaigns and battles on land and sea and in the air, knowing that our future is bound up with that which happens in the islands far off, and on the continents on the other side of the world. We worship a totalitarian God whose one idea in sending His Only Son was to bring a message for all the world of men, in every continent and on each remotest island. Our holy faith insists that we must have a global point of view. There are few more stirring words than the great invitation: "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church." Private prayer has always to reckon with the urge to be concerned only with those nearest to us and with ourselves. But this prayer says, "Lift your eyes, raise your sights, look over and beyond the barriers that separate." It says, "Come with Christ and see the world!" Nothing less will do, for anything less than that is not the Gospel.

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*This is the prayer that encompasses the whole wide world.* When one of Napoleon's generals in the Egyptian campaign scoffed at a certain plan of procedure as being "mere imagination," the Little Corporal flashed back: "Imagination, yes. But imagination rules the world!" This prayer for "the whole state of Christ's Church" demands the use of imagination; it insists that we summon up in the eye of the mind the far-flung fellowship which confesses the Name of all Names. The "whole state of Christ's Church" means the desperate, hungry, uprooted Chinese Christian who only lately learned the Name that can set this world on fire. It means the converted Hindu Untouchable who has found a new way of life and a new hope in Christ. It embraces the islands of the Pacific and penetrates the coldest fastnesses of Alaska and the Yukon. It includes the malarial swamps of the Upper Amazon and the Araucanian Indians a thousand miles nearer the Horn. To see these pictures, and for a few moments to dwell on them, commending the far-flung fellowship to the love and care of God, is to get the global point of view that every Christian needs.

It is not that we try to let our imaginations run riot or that we attempt to make "every port of call" on the map at every service. It is very much like a telephone switchboard, where there are a great many ruby-colored glasses. Not all of these light at once, but as the messages come through from various places and are assigned to particular destinations, so a little red light appears and shines. In

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this prayer for the whole state of Christ's Church we should light the little red lights at varying spots on the globe, commending the members of the Church Universal there to the love and care of God. That is the global point of view. It is a point of view which is not content with mere denominationalism but which comprehends all baptized Christians everywhere no matter what their particular Church label might be. It is the expressed desire that we all may be one in Christ Jesus, in "unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." The defense systems which each Christian group has erected against other Christian groups are now breaking down, and almost every earnest Christian desires and longs for a greater unity in the Church. That unity will not come about except it be preceded by innumerable prayers by all Christian people, prayers which will lay the only adequate groundwork for any final union. And although a united Church is still far in the future, yet it is true that these later years have seen a tremendous increase in peace and concord among Christian bodies. It seems to have escaped some that prayer has accomplished this more than deliberation and councils.

The prayer for "all Christian rulers" is tinged with unconscious irony in a day when it is hard to find any ruler who rejoices in the Christian name! We often prefer clever rulers to good ones and rather feel that a Christian character is a deterrent to governmental ability. It is in the American tradition to make fun of Congress, and

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men in public life should expect criticism; but also they need praying for! Dr. Lyman Beecher's famous prayer for rulers—"O Lord, grant that we may not despise our rulers; and grant that they may not act so we can't help it"—is humorous, but it is perhaps too truthful a reflection on our willingness to criticize the government and our reluctance to uphold our rulers by our prayers.

*"All Bishops and other Ministers" need to be prayed for.* Why is it that so few people in their daily prayers, or in their Sunday prayers, for that matter, ever remember their bishop and their pastor? Do they imagine these clerical representatives of theirs are people "naturally good," for whom the appetites of the world, the flesh, and the devil no longer have any appeal. I tell you that "by life and doctrine" to set forth God's true and living Word, and "rightly and duly to administer His holy Sacraments" is not the effeminate task most people think it is. It is not difficult to know literature, the poets, the philosophers of history; not half so difficult as it is to know God, and constantly to seek Him. It is much easier to be busy about many things than it is to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. The temptations to idleness, to conceit, to the respecting of persons, to self-pity—these have to be met and conquered; and they never seem to accept final defeat. Bishops and ministers need the prayers of their congregation. A Scotch deacon at the installation of the new preacher offered up the following prayer: "Lord, keep our new minister humble, and we'll



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keep him poor." But the comparative financial poverty of the ministry is as nothing compared with the poverty of prayer which Christian laymen offer for their clergy.

*At every church service somebody desperately needs our prayers.* It is a wonderful privilege to worship Sunday after Sunday in the same church. One gets to know people in the congregation, gets to know what life is demanding of them, what are their special needs, their temptations. It is a hard thing for a minister to come to a new parish and administer the Holy Communion to many people almost unknown to him. How much richer that experience grows with the years, as he can offer up a silent prayer, as each one kneels before him, that God will grant that particular person the needful grace. I think that perhaps any service of public worship is the poorer unless we have kept in mind the need of some other Christian kneeling in the same church. It is even possible to do this when one is in a strange church and without knowing the names of any worshipers. And somehow it makes the service a lot more real.

Surely a week never goes by for anyone without his hearing news of someone who "in this transitory life" is "in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity." That we were not made for unadulterated happiness in this world is a hard lesson for most to learn. We may resent pain and suffering which strike so blindly. We may wax indignant because a fine Christian person we know has gone through torture unspeakable. But after all the

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resentment and all the indignation, the plain fact remains that pain and suffering are part of the warp and woof of human life.

I thank Thee more that all our joy  
Is touched with pain.  
That shadows fall on brightest hours;  
That thorns remain;  
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,  
And not our chain.

—*Hymn (old)* 384

It is said that the Chinese word for suffering is two characters, one meaning *danger* and the other *opportunity*. Every testing time is dangerous for any Christian, in that his response may be the wrong one; and by wrong we mean a non-creative response. In old Brussels the finest lace was woven in darkened rooms, with a beam from the skylight above as the sole source of light. The finest patterns of Christian character are likewise woven in the darkness which is very nigh despair. William James called religion "that mysterious force by which the soul of the believer triumphs over suffering." The Christian triumphs because he has learned to find in every life-experience an opportunity to lead him God-ward. That is the meaning of life because it is the meaning of the Cross.

Opiates and over-solicitous doctors and relatives have restricted the powerful witness of a Christian death. Nevertheless, it continues to be one of the most effectual converting agencies we have yet seen. To witness the

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majestic departing of a servant of God in His faith and fear; to hear the Saviour named as life leaves the body—there is power in such a witness. In this prayer we can pray for all those who have departed this life in the faith of Jesus, commending them in paradise to God's providence, and asking that they may grow continually in the love and service of the heavenly Father.

We may follow them into the Church expectant with our prayers, as they follow us who are in the Church militant here in earth with their prayers, until in God's good time we meet again.

Lord Jesus, King of Paradise,  
O keep us in thy love.  
And guide us to that happy land  
Of perfect rest above;  
Where loyal hearts and true  
Stand ever in the light,  
All rapture thro' and thro',  
In God's most holy sight.

—*Hymn 588*

Let no man take this joyful knowledge from us. Through the grace of Christ and the love of God, the Church on earth and the Church in paradise are "On Journey"; and the journey is an expedition toward God. God made us for Himself, and for His pleasure we are created; and God will take us to Himself. For He is our Father forever, and He will be our God when the sun grows cold and the stars have forgotten to shine.



## The Invitation to Confession

**Y**E who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.



## CHAPTER IX

### *PRE-REQUISITES FOR FORGIVENESS*

A RECENT WRITER, waggish but thoughtful, said: "Each of us has something the matter with him, and if he hasn't, then that's what's wrong with him." This Invitation to Confession faces forthrightly the fact that there *is* something the matter with everyone. To say: "My dear brethren, if you do not repent, so to speak, and believe in the Gospel, as it were, you'll be lost, in a measure," is not to face a human soul with any sense of personal failure and sin. The whole system of Christian ethics is founded on an attitude of grateful penitence, and godly gratitude comes only after a candid acknowledgment of our selfishness and sin.

Our Saviour is the "Great Inviter" and his Gospel is replete with gracious invitations; but they are always invitations with conditions attached. The Holy Communion is such an invitation, but it is not open to everyone. It is not meant for the thoughtless and the indifferent and the frivolous, or the revengeful and impenitent; for such doubtless eat and drink to their own damnation as the Apostle so sagely reminded us. There are certain pre-requisites, certain conditions we are obliged to meet if we would know the peace and power that come from a sense of

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sins forgiven and the thrill of "newness of life."

*God demands from us a true and earnest repentance.* Gilbert K. Chesterton once remarked that "every man who will not have softening of the heart must at last have softening of the brain."<sup>1</sup> We take it that "softening of the heart" is another way of saying a tender conscience. And a tender conscience is a prime need for a "true and earnest repentance before God." There was an Indian woman who had completed a beautiful lace altar frontal. When Bishop Kemmerer visited Red Lake, Minnesota, where she lived, he asked the Indian woman how long the work had required. She replied apologetically, "Three months and seventeen days, but I would have finished it sooner, but I made a mistake in stitches that made one side of the chalice bigger than the other." The Bishop asked whether the mistake would have been noticed. She said, "No, but I knew it." She had a tender conscience in her work for God; she could not deceive herself.

There are any number of false repentances which come to us masquerading as sincere. There is the repentance of expediency and of personal convenience, when we indulge in a careless "Oh, I'm so sorry" when we aren't really sorry at all; all we are sorry about are the unpleasant consequences we perceive in the offing! Small boys often repent themselves of the evil they have done in proportion to the proximity of corporal punishment! That is not the kind of repentance envisioned in "true and

<sup>1</sup> Chesterton, G. K., *Orthodoxy*, New York: Dodd, Mead. Used by permission.



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earnest repentance.” This real repentance begins with the understanding that, try as we may, we can never overtake the evil we have caused; and that the Christian life is not a series of compensations whereby we do one good deed in return for one evil deed, so that the former cancels out the latter. Real repentance is being desperately sorry for the wrong things said and done. True repentance cries out:

So shall all speech of now and of tomorrow,  
All He hath shown me, or shall show me yet,  
Spring from an infinite and tender sorrow,  
Burst from a burning passion of regret.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it is true that real repentance comes only when we trace out the consequences of our sins, and perceive their deadly and cancerous proliferation. Just as the unsuspecting fly, tumbling into one strand of a spider's web, shakes not just a single strand but the whole of the web, so when we sin we affect not just the strand of our own lives but the whole web of society. It is a terrible thing to hear a man, who at last realizes the extensions of his folly, sob with his head in his hands: “If I had only known!” It is then that we see we are not strong enough or good enough to bear the weight of our wrongdoing; and it is then that we understand what that hymn means:

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin,

<sup>2</sup> Myers, *op. cit.*

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He only could unlock the gate  
Of heav'n and let us in.

—Hymn 65

*God demands that we live in love and charity with all men.* There is another condition to our right approach to God in the Holy Communion: we are to be living in love and in charity with our neighbors. The reason that God's power cannot get through to us is not His fault; it is because we so insulate ourselves against it that even His power cannot penetrate our obdurate stubbornness. We come to God so often with our weaknesses, with our hates and fears, with our old grudges and our petty spites; and the result is further and greater frustration. We forget that we cannot get the power without meeting the conditions; and one condition is that we come to God "in love and charity with all men."

That means among other things being in love and charity with one's own family. In England there is a curious custom. In most houses the dressing tables are placed right in front of the bedroom windows, so that passers-by see only the bare backs of those articles of furniture. That remains true even for the royal bureaus in Buckingham Palace! We so often show not our real selves but "our spiritual backs" to our own families. We are so shy about sharing with them the deeper things of the Faith that come to us, and we hide our feelings behind a mask of apparent indifference. Perhaps that is one reason that it is so hard for us to live in "love and charity" at home. But

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the fact remains that we do not get God's blessing at His holy table after we have promoted a fight at home!

But of course the Christian Faith is something more than domestic felicity, for the firm sociological foundation of the Faith is that God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the whole earth." It is "One World," indeed, but the Christian Faith goes one step further and states *whose* world it is! It is *God's* world, and all men are one in Him. Men are not equal in brains or opportunity, but they are all equal in that every man is potentially a son of God. We Christians have a particular duty in this country in the matter of racial discrimination. The disgraceful lynchings and race riotings that are so shameful a part of our history are not yet things of the past, and the sores still fester and waft their malodorous stench throughout this land and through all the world. With wise, steady, and ever increasing pressure the "Christian bloc" in America must help to heal that open wound in our society; for our bounden duty is to live in "love and charity with our neighbour."

We often say with too much satisfaction that the Gospel of Jesus is the greatest religion that man has ever had. It is, but we have made of it something less than it is. The Moslems, who are winning millions to their faith today, know nothing of race or color barriers; and the only thing that matters when a Zulu or a Swazi, an Indian or a Malayan embraces Islam is that from hence-

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forth he is a Moslem and a member of the "true" faith.

The Invitation to Confession will not let us forget that personal religion involves social religion and that you cannot have the one without the other. To do so is to turn God's blessing into a curse. You will remember in the somber tragedy, *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, that Othello's great love for Desdemona turns to hate, and in a fit of jealous anger he smothers her to death. There is something about the alchemy of love which is very delicately balanced, so that it can easily turn to hate. It is even true with this great Sacrament of God's love, that if we come to it in hate and unforgiveness it will turn to gall and wormwood in our breasts.

*God wants our new intentions.* A third condition is that we must have a new intention, we must intend to "lead a new life." Now I know that there have been many flippant things said about good intentions and that the road to the nether regions presumably is paved with them. That may very well be so, but such clever remarks really beg the question. For although we cannot and must not stop with a mere intention in living a Christian life, yet we must start with one. Wilbur and Orville Wright could never have built the first airplane to fly unless they had intended to do so. Beethoven and Bach and Brahms would never have written their great music had they not intended to do so. And no man can start to live in love and charity with his neighbors or even begin to scale the first rungs of the Christian life unless he first of all intends to do so.

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We cannot begin or continue the Christian life in a fit of absence of mind. It is needless to becloud the issue by saying that good intentions will not get a man to Heaven; for we know that they will not even get a man to the other side of the street, let alone to Heaven. But whether the next block or China or Heaven be our destination, we shall not get to any of these places unless we first intend to go there! The intention is the first step of the journey.

*There are three more steps we must take to meet God's conditions.* We must ask God to help us fulfil our intentions, knowing that without Him we shall fail; we must renew, as often as possible, our intentions to lead a new life, because the human organism learns new habit patterns only after continuous repetition; and we must find some concrete and specific way of carrying out our new intentions.

God must be taken into partnership in living the new life. That seems an absurdly simple statement, but its necessity is often overlooked. We cannot lead a new life without prayer, without constant communion with God, without the power and constantly sought aid of his Holy Spirit. It was our Saviour who reminded us that one cannot gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. No more can we lead new lives without the aids that God will freely supply for the asking. We must renew our good intentions very often, for God's writing on our souls is readily erased, as rain blots out writing on the sands. And we must never have a good intention without putting it

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to work in a very concrete and specific way. It is not enough to say, "I will lead a new life by God's grace"; one must go on and say in what way that new life shall be expressed. I will take a new attitude toward my home, toward my work, toward my friends; and I will try to do this or that specific thing in order to express it. People who feel strongly about any sin, personal or social, and do nothing to help correct it may develop a feeling of hate in exact proportion to their impotence.

It is then, when all these conditions are fulfilled, that we can draw near with faith and take the Holy Sacrament for our comfort, and find ourselves ready to make confession to Almighty God, devoutly kneeling.

For all the sins I have confessed to thee,  
For all the secret sins I do not see;  
All that I am not, Lord, I ask to be.  
Teach me to live.<sup>3</sup>

The tragedy of our past disloyalties and of our betrayals looms crystal clear; and we see ourselves as God sees us. And then the darkness goes and the daybreak of God's forgiveness awakens our souls.

And suddenly across the cringing darkness,  
Shattering that cold betrayal, to hear  
The awful whisper—the Immortal Passion—  
"Draw near with faith . . . draw near."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Author unknown.

<sup>4</sup> Gile, Louisa Boyd, "Draw Near with Faith," from *The Living Church*, Milwaukee, issue of April 4, 1936.

## The General Confession

ALMIGHTY God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter Serve and please thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*





## CHAPTER X

### *CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL*

ONE OF THOSE BRAVE MEN who floated on the Pacific for twenty-one days with Eddie Rickenbacker tells how, after they had been afloat for two weeks the men began to feel they would get on better with God if they "came clean." Sergeant Bartek, who tells of the incident, says that after making their confessions to one another the men on the rafts felt stronger and better. Those lonely men in their desperate extremity discovered for themselves that "confession is good for the soul." They found that it gave them new power, and they felt clean for the first time in many days. True confession always has that effect. That is why the General Confession is placed here in the Communion service, so that we may 'come clean' with God," get His forgiving power, and go on to "serve and please Him in newness of life." The depth of our penitence measures the reality of the sacrifice we offer to God.

It is fitting that in this general confession we should begin by addressing Him as "Almighty God" who has almighty power; as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" which makes Him the God of Love; as "Maker of all things" because everything He makes is good; and as the

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“Judge of all men,” for He alone has the right to hear our confession and to judge our lives. So we approach the judgment bar, which is also the mercy seat, and tell the truth about ourselves, individually and corporately.

*Confession of sin is the only realistic attitude for ourselves.* For much too long we Christians have kept silent while the so-called intellectuals gibe at our religion as being what they are pleased to call “a retreat from reality.” It is a case of the pot calling the kettle black; for it is not faith but atheism and agnosticism which are retreats from a realistic approach to life. That so many people of apparent intelligence and good sense still persist in thinking that the natural man is a good creature is one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to any real progress either individual or social. The childish faith that man is by nature good and that he needs no supernatural help of any kind is nothing less than the pollyanna philosophy which always has led men to disaster. Not until a man discovers for himself that he and his fellow men have sinned and come short of the glory of God, not until he is ready to say he is sorry for those shortcomings is he taking a realistic view and a constructive attitude to life.

To those untutored in the art of confessing their sins, these statements of sorrow in the General Confession appear grossly exaggerated. Such phrases as “the remembrance of them is grievous unto us” and “the burden of them is intolerable” seem quite out of place, and even a little morbid. This perhaps is due to a popular confusion

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between the criminal and the Christian code. Because we have not robbed others, because we have committed no overt acts of immorality, because we have not shot anyone in cold blood, because we have never cheated widows and orphans, we like to think that the page of our life is quite clean. The fact that we have never been arrested except for minor traffic violations is made the basis of a totally unwarranted assumption that we have therefore kept the laws of God! As if Christ ever had any use for such a negative faith!

Alfred North Whitehead once said that "religion is what a man does with his aloneness"; and while we need not accept that as a totally adequate description, it is true that when we are alone with ourselves we know that we have failed and come short of our possibilities. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" is a truthful vignette of every man's candid solitary appraisal of himself. There was in Czarist Russia a statue of Alexander II astride a gigantic horse in front of the Nicholas station in St. Petersburg. The neck of the horse was bent and arched against the chest, held there apparently by the reins. But when one looked closer the reins were flimsy bits of string! The horse could snap them if he sneezed! That huge horse with its slender reins is like our untamed human nature that we have tried to hold in check with the toy ribbons of our godless morality and our humanistic optimism. There is in the Bureau of Standards in Washington a yardstick which is really a yardstick, for it is as

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near to being an exact three feet in length as the engineering genius of man can make it; and all other yardsticks in this country must be compared with it for exactness. It is not that we are "as good as anybody else" that matters; for Christ in His sublime character is the true yardstick, and our lives must be compared with His and not with others. When we bring ourselves to do that, the words of the Confession no longer seem extravagant but utterly inadequate.

*Confession of sin is the only realistic attitude for our corporate selves which we call "society."* Lord Frederick Hamilton tells in one of his fascinating books how Count Mitsu of Japan went every night with the male members of the family to the shrine of his ancestors, before which burned a little red lamp. And there before that shrine the men made their confession of all the sins they had committed during that day and asked forgiveness for them and for any wrong done the memory of their ancestors. They had a very deep sense of their corporate responsibility; and we also must bear our due share of responsibility for the kind of society in which we live. I do not think that any sane man who looks out on the world today could deny that the remembrance of this present world's condition is "grievous" and that the burden of the contemporary scene is indeed "intolerable." We may not play the Levite any more, either personally or nationally; for if this world is soaked in blood, if it is filled with the wail of little children slowly starving, if it

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is corrupted with the corpses of men rotting in the sun, then that is our burden, our sin, and our shame. God did not intend that it should be that way.

Earth might be fair, and all men glad and wise.  
Age after age their tragic empires rise,  
Built while they dream, and in that dreaming weep:  
Would man but wake from out his haunted sleep,  
Earth might be fair and all men glad and wise.  
—Hymn 536

*Repentance brings new power to men and nations.*  
Earth might be fair, but it is not and we know it. And it never will be fair until the remembrance of our sins is so grievous to us, until the burden of them so intolerable, that we confess our sins and bombard God for His help; until we make Christ's vision for the Kingdom of God on earth both our vision and our plan of action. Until we determine that with the help of God Almighty:

Earth shall be fair, and all her people one:  
Nor till that hour shall God's whole will be done.  
Now, even now, once more from earth to sky  
Peals forth in joy man's old undaunted cry,  
"Earth shall be fair, and all her folk be one!"  
—Hymn 536

We have in these last bloody years seen many a nation humbled: the Poles at Warsaw, the Dutch at Rotterdam, the French at Compiègne, the British at Hong Kong and Singapore, and ourselves at Bataan and Pearl Harbor. National pride has been wounded, but there are few signs

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that a great wave of repentance is to sweep any one of the Allied Nations. Yet unless it does, no treaty of peace in the future, however well written it may be, will suffice to make earth "fair, and all men glad and wise." Confession and repentance bring a new and divine power to our human devices, and we shall do well to know it.

The Confession ends with the petition that hereafter we may "serve and please him in newness of life, to the honour and glory of his Name." The verb "to forgive" is a transitive verb and it takes an object. God's forgiveness is not a spiritual medal to be packed away with our other decorations for good conduct. It is something to be used, it is a new attitude toward life made possible by a new power from God. We do not make our confession in order to make ourselves "feel better," but to equip ourselves for bringing the Christian faith to bear more effectively on ourselves and on society.

Confession is good for the soul, for one's own soul and for the soul of a nation. When more men with repentant power insist not only that this is "One World" but that it is "God's World"; when nations filled with repentant power are determined to start in newness of national life; then man will at last be on the highroad to serving and pleasing God. Then the Kingdom of God will not be very far away.

## The Absolution

**A**LMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all those who with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him; Have mercy upon you; pardon and deliver you from all your sins; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness; and bring you to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*





## CHAPTER XI

### *AN OFFICIAL PROCLAMATION*

WHEN THE JURY FOREMAN takes the final and decisive vote among his fellow jurors, the guilt or innocence of the prisoner at the bar is decided. It is decided in that short interval between the taking of the vote and the announcement of the verdict in the hearing of the court. But not until the foreman makes the announcement, which either sets the accused free or sends him to jail, is it an official proclamation. Not until then can the judge pronounce the man free or sentence him. If the man be deemed innocent, he is not free until the judge makes him free by his official words from the bench. The Absolution given by the priest at the altar has many likenesses to the judge's proclamation of freedom to the accused. For the priestly absolution is not a private opinion, but a weighty and official declaration about God's attitude toward his repentant creatures.

*The absolution is an official assurance that God is a forgiving God.* It is so easy for us to get wrong ideas about God in spite of all that He has revealed about Himself in Jesus and in the multitude of His saints. We need constant reminders that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will always forgive penitent sinners, providing the

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repentance is real; otherwise we have no right to presume on forgiveness when we are only anxious to avoid the consequences of folly.

Men need this assurance of forgiveness, and those who do not seek it in church go elsewhere. Many who need assurance go to a medical man instead of to church or to a clergyman, and some hardy prophets have opined that soon psychiatry will be an exact science and that it will deal with anxiety neuroses and other fears and phobias so well that the Church will be outmoded as a medium of assurance.

There is little doubt that a competent and Christian psychiatrist can "hear a confession" as well as, and perhaps better than, some clergymen. Few would deny that such confession is good for an overburdened soul in desperate need of sharing the load. But right here the function of the medical man stops; for do what he will, and be he never so wise, he is not competent to go on to the next and most necessary step, which is to pronounce "forgiveness of sins." And lacking that, the soul is still perturbed and anxious and distraught. The authority of a medical man must be a medical authority; it can never be an authority which speaks for a man's soul. Confession *is* good for the soul, but confession is not enough; it merely leaves the house swept and garnished and ready for other and more evil spirits to enter in and dwell there.

There is in all men the ineradicable desire to "start over again," to put the failures and sins away and begin

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with a clean slate. The alternatives are dangerous repression or a constant harping on past sins. Man needs the assurance by a recognized and capable authority that he *can* start over again, whether he is concerned with the building of a new earthly house, or with a "house not made with hands eternal in the heavens." And the heart of man will ever remain restless until it rests in the assurance that God will and does forgive sins and allows a new beginning.

Something happens to the repentant soul when that Absolution is pronounced. God puts that man's sins away; He puts them, in Old Testament phraseology, "behind His back."

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white  
as snow;

Though they be <sup>as</sup> red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

—*Isaiah 1:18*

That Absolution declares and makes open the way to a new start in life with a clean page, with a new outlook and an open road.

*It is an official proclamation that the Church is a fellowship of forgiveness.* But the business of forgiveness is not exhausted when we have examined the vertical relationship between a soul and its God. The Cross of Jesus, which is the eternal symbol of God's intentions toward man, has not only a vertical member but also a horizontal arm. The vertical aspect of God's forgiveness to man is

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intimately related to the forgiveness man extends to his fellow sinners. Christ reminded us that God's forgiveness toward us is operative only insofar as "we forgive those who trespass against us." Quite possibly too few people in church feel that something happens at the Absolution because they have "short-circuited" by their persistent retention of hate and malice and "all uncharitableness" to some fellow human being any forgiveness God might extend to them. Or, to change the figure, just as powerful x-rays cannot penetrate a thick sheet of lead, so God's love cannot penetrate through a willingly hardened heart. The priest at the altar is there to proclaim directly God's willingness to forgive; he also is there to state that that mercy is operative only in hearts "that are in love and charity with their neighbours" and with those who "intend to lead a new life." And while there is little doubt in the minds of the average church congregation that God is a forgiving God, there is room for grave doubt that the Christian fellowship is at all times a fellowship of forgiveness. That must be one good reason for the obvious lack of power in the average Christian church.

"Forgiveness is forgiving the unforgivable, else it is not forgiveness at all."<sup>1</sup> That means having a heart of compassion not toward the saints, which is simple, but toward the unlovely, which is hard. It is forgiveness which releases the power of God as nothing else can do. When the late Bishop John Richardson Selwyn was out in Melanesia

<sup>1</sup> Chesterton, G. K., *Orthodoxy*, New York: Dodd, Mead. Used by permission.

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in the days before his consecration, there was a boy at the Church School on Norfolk Island who was very rough and hard to manage. One day when Mr. Selwyn spoke to the boy about something he had refused to do, the lad flew into a passion and struck Selwyn in the face. Selwyn could not trust himself to speak, so he turned on his heel and walked away. Soon the boy was sent back to his own island without having been baptized and shortly he went back to his heathen ways. It was many years afterward that a Church of England missionary named Bice was sent for on a Melanesian island with the request that he call on a native who was dying. Coming to him, Mr. Bice found that he wanted to be baptized, and when the preparations were made and the man was asked what name he wished to take as his Christian name, he said: "Call me John Selwyn, because long ago when I was a boy on Norfolk Island, he taught me what Christ was like that day I struck him in the face. Afterward he never said a word except of love to me."

That is but one of a thousand illustrations of the power of God that is released through forgiveness. It is because we all are in desperate need of the mercy of God, it is because we dare not ask God or man to deal with us on the basis of justice but only on the basis of mercy, that hardening of the heart is more dangerous to a man's soul than the hardening of his arteries is to his body. Do you remember what Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, says to Shylock?

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Though justice be thy plea, consider this—  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation; we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.

—*Act IV, Scene 1*

If the Church is to have the power of God, it must be a forgiving community. It must be slow in judgment, swift in forgiveness.

Judge not, the workings of his brain and of his heart  
Thou canst not see.  
What looks to thy dim eyes a stain,  
In God's pure sight may only be a scar,  
Won from some well-fought field,  
Where thou would'st only faint and yield.<sup>2</sup>

To those who will keep in mind these interdependent truths of God's forgiveness of us and of our forgiveness of others, there is the promise of what will happen to us. "Pardon and deliver you from all your sins," which means beginning life all over again; "confirm and strengthen you in all goodness," which means that the power of God is available as we press toward the goal of our high calling; "and bring you to everlasting life," which means that life in God is not a dead end but is like a spiral staircase "where we are always coming back to the same standpoint from a higher position on the circling ground." This Absolution is not a vague report,

<sup>2</sup> Author unknown.

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it is not a hazy notion, it is not a pious opinion; it is God's official proclamation of His intentions toward all those who are faithful members of the forgiving community, which is the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.





## The Comfortable Words

Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all who truly turn to him.

**C**OME unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. *St. Matt. xi. 28.*

So God loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *St. John iii. 16.*

Hear also what Saint Paul saith.

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *1 Tim. i. 15.*

Hear also what Saint John saith.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins. *1 St. John ii. 1, 2.*

Lift up your hearts.



## CHAPTER XII

### *STRONG IN THE STRENGTH THAT GOD SUPPLIES*

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG BOY there was in our home an article of domestic comfort called a feather bed. The peculiar property of this hillock of down, so far as two small boys were concerned, was that the two small boys could steal into the bedroom at any time when the parental bed was unmade, and taking a running jump, land right in the middle of the mountain of down, and get all but smothered in the process! There is an idea that the Christian faith is a religion of good soft comfort, as we understand that word today. It is safe to say that too many of us have the idea that the religion of Jesus Christ exists to make us feel comfortable; whereas its more proper function is to make us feel uncomfortable. When we say: "Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith," it is a reminder that Jesus comes to strengthen us, to make us powerful, to be "strong in the strength that God supplies through his eternal Son." He does not come to sing us a lullaby! The four Comfortable Words are four great assurances of the kind of strength that God will give us in Christ.

*God gives us a lifelong guarantee.* The first word

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starts with Jesus, as all our personal faith must start with Him. And He says: "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you." That is a vignette of the Gospel, "Come unto me." Surely this age has understood it: for five men, each one a leader in his country, holds the fate of millions in his hands. They say severally, "Come unto me and be the slaves of the state"; "Come unto me and found the world revolution of the proletariat" (suspended for the duration); "Come unto me and create an all Asia co-prosperity sphere." But Jesus our Saviour says: "Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." It is a lifelong guarantee that He offers, not a short-term policy; for His word was spoken not only to those beside the lake in the long ago, but to men who need Him in every generation, and even in this today.

O Jesus, may it be  
Thou spakest not to them alone,  
But even now to me.<sup>1</sup>

With a more or less brave show we try to pretend that we have no burdens, but every man carries one or more just the same. And some of them are final burdens, about which there is nothing to be done, but about which there is everything to be hoped. You cannot stand with a man by an open grave with the casket which holds the mortal dust of the only woman he can ever love; you cannot

<sup>1</sup> Author unknown.

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hear the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," without knowing that some burdens will have to be carried until the day when another casket hovers over another open grave. Some burdens are final; but to those who have to carry them Jesus says: "Come unto me and I will give you the strength to carry the load."

There are other burdens which are self-imposed and which we do not need to carry, which are so much excess baggage. Perhaps you are carrying that kind of load; something that smarts, that makes you ashamed of yourself, that leaves you at your wits' end. Do you have a personality quirk that is always getting you into trouble? Have you a home situation that seems to get more and more intolerable with every week? Have you had, with one whom you trusted, a bitter experience which left you hard and cynical? Jesus says: you do not need to carry those loads. He says: "Come unto me and I will refresh you, make you over, and give you the strength to go on."

*"And I will refresh you."* There are lots of people besides soldiers who are digging foxholes for themselves, trying to hide from the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Christ will not have us crawling into a hole to escape life, but He will give us the equipment to go on fighting the good fight. More than that, He promises that the grace or equipment He gives will always be enough for the load we have to carry. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God

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is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." This is Jesus' law of compensation, that whatever burden life demands, He will never let us down, will never let us go, and will supply sufficient strength to meet the need.

*Strong Son of God!* "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." That is the second Comfortable Word, by which we may be "strong in the strength that God supplies through his eternal Son." I know that Christians have often been accused of anthropomorphism, which is a select way of saying that we have created God in our own manlike image. We must grant that we cannot describe God in any adequate way. We know that at best we have but a partial idea of Him. Just the same "our partial ideas of God are partly right"; and the statement that God so loved the world is the greatest statement man has ever made about God; and we have it both on the authority of Jesus' words and on the greater authority of Jesus' life.

It is a pity we have so cheapened the word *love* that now it has become the equivalent of either sickly sentimentality or of man's unbridled lust. The love of God is not a cheap sentimentality toward man, but it is more like a fiery deed of agony. We may not know, we cannot tell either the pains He had to bear, or what it cost God to love the world of men. Only Calvary can give the full answer, and for us on earth that only reveals the

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... hidden love of God whose height,  
Whose depth unfathom'd no man knows.

—Hymn 464

It is very easy to be cynical about God, and it is equally easy to be cynical about life, in these days of dread disaster when the foundation stones of our civilization rock and tremble. A faith which undergirds and sustains our Christian confidence is no easy matter. But amid the shriek of bombs and the roar of artillery, the cry of Jesus rings out louder and clearer than the devilish devices of men: "God so loved the world."

*Jesus came to save!* St. Paul, Paul the Dauntless, the Apostle to the Gentiles, the Man in Christ, is himself the ageless example of one "strong in the strength that God supplies through his eternal Son." Paul has the third word of assurance: "This is a true saying and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." No other message of any other religion compares with that word of strength and comfort. Buddhism's "comfortable" message is that there is nothing to worry about because soon you will no longer exist. The religion of Islam has the interesting announcement that there is but one God and that Mohammed is his prophet for its *pèce de résistance*. And Confucianism says you must be good and worship your ancestors. Beside these earthbound pronouncements, the message of the Gospel of the Son of God towers like an Everest: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

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The sublimity of this gospel reaches down into the deepest recesses of men's hearts and stirs them to response. Do you remember that old story of Richard the Lion-Hearted, King of England, who was waylaid and imprisoned by his enemies in Austria whilst coming home from a Crusade. All England was in despair for nobody could discover the king's whereabouts; but a French musician named Blondin, who was a member of the king's household in England, went out to seek his king. The two had spent many an hour together writing lays and sonnets which they alone knew. So, from fortress to fortress Blondin went throughout Austria, singing those lays; and finally, before one craggy castle, Blondin heard a manly voice repeating his songs. The king was found, and soon was released. So does God's message to us through His Son reach into the fastnesses of men's hearts: "Jesus comes to save."

He comes to save us from despair about ourselves; about mankind, and about the purpose of God for the world. We are a long way from the starry-eyed self-confidence in the inevitable progress of man that was a part of the thinking of Victorian days. This twentieth century has been bathed in blood and savagery unmatched in man's long history, and these past four decades have plunged many thoughtful persons to the brink of despair for humankind. That despair is fully as dangerous as the former self-assurance; and it is Jesus who comes to save us from it. He tells us that men are potentially the sons



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of God even if they act like beasts. He tells us that there is a way that man can climb from his savagery and sin and stand redeemed. He proclaims that there is hope for a new society here on earth when God's will shall be done here as it is done in Heaven. He reminds us that God had a purpose in creating men, that they might be His sons indeed; and that that purpose of God's will be worked out, until the "earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea." The distinguished scientist, Sir Arthur Keith, once said, "This world of ours has been constructed like a superbly written novel: we pursue the tale with avidity hoping to discover the plot." It is only Jesus who has the answer, the key to the plot. He is the Key, He is the Answer. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." That is why He came.

*We have an advocate.* "Hear also what Saint John saith: If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins." We have an advocate! It is part of the glorious liberty of the children of this land that no man accused of a crime has to stand in court alone and unbefriended. Any man who stands in jeopardy of life or liberty may have assigned to him a public defender if he cannot afford to hire a lawyer to plead his case. And the bounden duty of that public advocate is to say what can be said for the accused man at the bar of justice. It is his task to assemble everything that can be presented

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in extenuation and in favor of his client; he is bound to protect his client's interests and see to it that he is given every chance. That is the way in which St. John wants us to think of our Saviour Jesus, as the Advocate of every man, the One who is on our side.

Is there anyone who has been so browbeaten by life that he is now in despair? Is there a man who single-handed has had to fight through the weary decades against some gross wrong? Is there a person who is now ready to stop fighting in a righteous cause, and give up, and drift with the current? To all these comes this Comfortable Word: "You are not alone." Did you ever think you were? God would be false to His every promise if that were true. It might be Athanasius battling the whole world, willing to:

Contend for the shade of a word,  
A thing not seen with the eye.

It might be Martin Luther with the whole papal world against him as he shouted: "Here I stand. God help me. I can do no other." It might be Pasteur, carrying on his saving work in spite of the scorn and taunts of his contemporaries. But though all these seemed to stand alone, they were not alone. They had an Advocate, they had a Helper, they had with them Jesus Christ the righteous. And whenever we work the works of Him that made us we have the selfsame guarantee, that He will be at our side.

He will not only be with us, He will also "fill up"

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that which is lacking in us, against that day when we shall appear before the Judge of quick and dead.

Then tho' our foul and limitless transgression  
Grows with our growing, with our breath began,  
Raise thou the arms of endless intercession,  
Jesus, divinest when thou most art man!<sup>2</sup>.

We have an Advocate who will take us as we are, and redeem us with what we have, and raise us to what we should be: the sons of God.

Thou hast raised our human nature  
On the clouds to God's right hand:  
There we sit in heavenly places,  
There with thee in glory stand.  
Jesus reigns, adored by angels;  
Man with God is on the throne;  
Mighty Lord, in thine ascension,  
We by faith behold our own.

—*Hymn 103*

Is it any wonder that He bids us, with these Comfortable Words ringing in our ears, "Lift up your hearts?" What else is there to do?

<sup>2</sup> Myers, *op. cit.*



## The Consecration Prayer

ALL glory be to thee, Almighty God, our heavenly Father, for that thou, of thy tender mercy, didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; who made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in his holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that his precious death and sacrifice, until his coming again: For in the night in which he was betrayed, (a) he took Bread; and when he had given thanks, (b) he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, (c) this is my Body, which is given for you; Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper, (d) he took the Cup; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for (e) this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me.

(a) *Here the Priest is to take the Paten into his hands.*

(b) *And here to break the Bread.*

(c) *And here to lay his hand upon all the Bread.*

(d) *Here he is to take the Cup into his hands.*

(e) *And here he is to lay his hand upon every vessel in which there is any Wine to be consecrated.*

WHEREFORE, O Lord and heavenly Father, according to the institution of thy dearly beloved Son our Saviour Jesus

*The Oblation.*

Christ, we, thy humble servants, do celebrate and make here before thy Divine Majesty, with these thy holy gifts, which we now offer unto thee, the memorial thy Son hath commanded us to make; having in remembrance his blessed passion and precious death, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; rendering unto thee most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

**A**ND we most humbly beseech thee, *The Invocation.*  
O Merciful Father, to hear us; and,  
of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.

**A**ND we earnestly desire thy fatherly goodness, mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant that, by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we, and all thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that we, and all others who shall be partakers of this Holy Communion, may worthily receive the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction,

and made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him. And although we are unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice; yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. *Amen.*





## CHAPTER XIII

### *S. O. S.!*

SOME OF US WELL REMEMBER that Monday morning in 1912 when the news of the sinking of the huge new White Star liner, *Titanic*, burst upon an incredulous world. These were days before world-wide catastrophes came to us every morning, and the bleak news sent a shudder of horror through the civilized world. For on that calm clear Sunday night of April 14, 1912, the new liner raced at twenty-two knots, ignoring the warnings from the *Caronia* and the *Baltic* of icebergs ahead. A few minutes after the *Californian* had sent a last wireless warning, the *Titanic* got her death wound—a jagged three-hundred foot gash along the hull below the water-line. Frantically she sent out her S. O. S., but the operator on the *Californian*, only twelve miles away, had switched off his instruments and gone to bed. Fifteen hundred people drowned that night in the “unsinkable” ship. On a Good Friday nearly two millennia ago God sent out a world-wide call, an S. O. S., when Jesus his Son made “a full perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” God was broadcasting to the world from Calvary that by this full sacrifice, by this perfect oblation, and by this suf-

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ficient satisfaction, mankind might be saved. God is still sending that message to men.

*Jesus gave Himself as a full sacrifice.* It was God the Father who "so loved the world that he gave his Son." Of the Father's love was Christ begotten, and by that same love was He sent into the world to suffer and to die and to rise again for us. This sending was done without reservation, without cavil, without precedent; it was the most revealing clue to understanding the true nature of the One who made the world in which we live; and the life of Jesus on earth is the development of that clue. God gave His Son, too! Surely *son* is a word which comes alive in this age, when almost every family in the Western world knows what it means to give a son. They look so young as they say goodbye; we know the risks they will run before they come home again; and when they go they take with them a piece of our hearts. There is nothing on this earth so dyed with Heaven's radiance, nothing so selfless and godlike as the love of true parents for their child; and the agony of parting is the price we must of necessity pay for the joy that comes with such love. Jesus gave Himself for a full sacrifice on the Cross in complete obedience to His Father's will; it is because of this gift that God can say today to the grieving parent: "I know"; and to those bereaved of their son: "I understand. I gave my Son too!"

The sacrifice of Calvary was full in that it was voluntary, willing, and freely offered; else it would have had

no power to save. When our Lord once said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend," He was being both prophetic and autobiographical; it was a preview of Calvary. That free and full sacrifice of Himself is nowhere so graphically shown as when He stood in proud and silent humility in Pilate's hall. If He opened not His mouth before the pusillanimous Roman, it was because there was nothing He could say that Pilate could understand; and if He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, it was because He willed it should be so and not because He could not have escaped. In crucifixes made after the Greek tradition, the figure of Jesus on the Cross is often shown without any nails in hands and feet. They say it was not the nails that kept him there but his own full and free love for men.

His sacrifice was full in that it was *typical*, in the root sense of that word; it was the type, the archetype of all sacrifice, the Act in which is gathered up every precious meaning and shade and nuance of the verb *to give*. In a way every airplane we see reminds us of the Wright brothers with their daring experiments when this century was still young. In a way every telephone reminds us of Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of that ubiquitous instrument. And in a very real way all sacrifice and all noble and generous, self-forgetful living brings us to the foot of Golgotha. There is in the novel, *Anthony Adverse*, a Brother Francois, whose life of loving sacrifice makes us say of him: "How like Jesus!" And we say this of him

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long before we come to that part of the story where his body hangs transfixed upon an African cross. That is what we say whenever we read or hear of some contemporary story of a man's courageous sacrifice: "How like Jesus!" For Jesus is still the pattern of all self-giving, and it is abundantly true that a life is never so well and truly lived as when seemingly it is thrown away. The more heroic and glorious a man's death is, the more we say of it: "How like Jesus!" For His was the full and complete sacrifice.

*Jesus made the perfect oblation of His life.* An oblation is something which is dedicated, and a sacred oblation is something which is dedicated to God. Perhaps we can carry this thought one step further and say that to "dedicate" really means to "give back" to God:

I give thee back the life I owe,  
That in thine ocean depths its flow  
May richer, fuller be.

—Hymn 458

It was this that Jesus did: He gave His life back to God in a complete and perfect oblation. Here is a secret of the Christian faith made plain: that the oblation of ourselves is the only thing of value to God that we can offer Him. And until we do offer Him just that, not all the diamonds of Kimberley, not all the gold of Johannesburg, not all the pearls of the ocean can together make an oblation which in God's sight compares with the

simple offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies" to Him in a "sober, righteous, and godly life."

Jesus made the perfect oblation in that the offering which He made, of Himself, both complemented and implemented the Good News He had preached. He died as He had lived, and the oblation of the cross was all of a piece with the Sermon on the Mount and with the words at the Holy Supper. We remember that President Lincoln at Gettysburg said: "The world will not long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." But with Jesus there is no such a dichotomy; what He said and what He did are perfectly one. If we just had the words that He spoke in Judea and in Galilee in the long ago, the literature of the world would be immeasurably the richer; but the words without the life to match them would have brought man very little nearer to God. In the perfectly integrated life of our Lord we find that there is no saying one thing and doing another, as we too often find with ourselves. With Him the word and the deed were two sides of the same currency of His life's oblation.

Jesus made the perfect oblation in that He gave His most precious gift, Himself. It is not too difficult to buy a gift; it is much harder to offer a life. But the value of a gift is not its monetary cost but its cost in terms of human life and effort. So He let nothing stand in the way of giving to the utmost that "last full measure of devotion" that leaves nothing to be desired nor deserved.

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Jesus our good Shepherd, laying down thy life,  
Lest thy sheep should perish, in the cruel strife.  
Help us to remember all thy love and care,  
Trust in thee and love thee,  
Always, everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

*Our Lord also made the sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world;* and He did this on Calvary. "Sometime, somewhere, someone had to show sin for what it was, had to show what evil could do. Sometime, somewhere, someone had to give the final answer to sin's overcoming. The beginning of our era is the sometime, Jesus is that Someone, and cross-crowned Calvary is the place."

Calvary is the place where God was satisfied, where our Saviour was satisfied, and where man was satisfied. Not satisfied in any medieval or legal or theological sense, but in the ordinary meaning of that word. God knew after Calvary that He had done everything He could do for man; if we may say so reverently, He had done His best. It is because He has done His best that He can and does still call us to Himself. For God calls us now from Calvary:

God who at sundry times in manners many,  
Spake to the fathers and is speaking still;  
Eager to find if ever or if any  
Souls will obey and hearken to his will.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hymnal Companion*, 501.

<sup>2</sup> Myers, *op. cit.*

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At Calvary, Jesus was satisfied. When He said, "It is finished. . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," He knew he had earned the Father's imperishable accolade. The life on earth was now complete and He might soon start the homeward journey. How great the contrast of the journey home with those earthly travels over dusty roads and mountain tracks! But Jesus could not have gone back to the Father's many mansions did He not know He had fulfilled His mission.

Hark! those bursts of acclamation!  
Hark! those loud triumphant chords!  
Jesus takes the highest station;  
O what joy the sight affords!  
Crown him! Crown him  
King of kings, and Lord of lords.

—*Hymn 105*

With Calvary, man is satisfied. For had Calvary never happened, some great soul sometime in the story of mankind, would have discovered the ideal solution to God's redemption of man. That man would have looked over the long line of prophets and saints and men of wisdom, with their partial answers to his ultimate questions, and he would have said: "Why has not God made things plain beyond all doubt? Why has He not sent us Himself?" The answer is that He has, in Christ. God gave His Son, too.

On Good Friday in olden times a cross was placed on the altar steps, and everyone knelt down to kiss it, in

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thankful remembrance of the death of Christ who made on Calvary "by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." That is still God's message to a world sunk in shame and bound by the chain of its sin:

There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified  
Who died to save us all.

—*Hymn 65*

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"



## The Lord's Prayer

OUR Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*



## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE THREE LEGITIMATE PETITIONS*

WHEN A COIN IS USED for many years, it tends to become defaced and indistinct. The sacred word *Father*, as addressed to God, has been in such current and careless usage. Too many use it when they regard Him not as a Father but as an amiable superman who will come to their personal rescue immediately upon demand. Those who read the gospel of St. Mark carefully will discover for themselves that Jesus seldom if ever speaks of the Fatherhood of God in public, for when He does so speak it is to His own disciples, and to them only after St. Peter's great confession of faith. It is blasphemy to claim God as Father when we neither treat Him as such nor try to discover and obey His will. The Lord's Prayer is the greatest of all prayers, and it might well be on the lips of all earnest Christians three times a day. At its heart that prayer is three simple petitions to the Father of all. The Christian religion believes in petitions to God if they ask for such things as please Him. It is a curious thing in Mohammendanism that Moslems never ask God for anything, for they think that to do such is an insult to Allah. But while it is certain that some of our petitions must seem selfish and childish to

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God, yet we may be sure that there are three petitions that are at all times legitimate and in accord with His holy will. They are the three which are at the heart of the Lord's Prayer, and they have the authority and blessing of our Lord Himself.

*We are to pray for the coming of the Kingdom.* The first petition is "Thy kingdom come." Bring in thy kingdom Lord!

Thy kingdom come, O God!  
Thy rule, O Christ, begin!  
Break with thine iron rod  
The tyrannies of sin!

—Hymn 544

Perhaps that petition never seemed so incredible, so impossible of consummation, as it does today. For most of us have lived long enough to see the shattering of a great and comfortable dream. At the end of the past century there were many thoughtful men who felt that the Kingdom was "just around the corner." They felt rather certain that, if wars were not exactly things of the savage past, wars on a tremendous scale were no longer possible, because man had arrived beyond that stage. The general idea seemed to be that there were a few savage tribes to be taught Western ways of civilization and salvation. Then everything would be all right in this best of all possible worlds. The newly rediscovered doctrine of evolution was applied to the Kingdom of God. Everyone was prepared to let nature take its course.

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But the course nature has taken indicates that the Kingdom of God will not come by sitting still; it will not come unless and until the Christians who make up the Church of Christ are ready and willing to "strive unto blood" for it. The very foundation stones of the Faith are now openly denied. The followers of Karl Marx are but one group who utterly repudiate any interpretation of life except the materialistic. It is true that many of these leaders of modern movements are quite sincere in what they think and write, but history is full of men who have been quite sincere but quite wrong. Jesus put it bluntly when He said that we were to be so passionately concerned with the coming of the Kingdom that we were to "make it our first care."

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,  
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.  
Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest  
abode,  
But the hope of the City of God, at the other end of  
the road.<sup>1</sup>

The petition, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," includes peace on earth; it means the equitable distribution of goods; it means the end of the old imperialisms; it means one world inhabited by men of one blood; it means one world which is God's world.

<sup>1</sup> Masfield, John, "The Seeker," from *Poems*, New York: Macmillan. Used by permission.

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*The second petition, "Give us this day our daily bread,"* means: "Give me every day bread for my body and bread for my soul." God is concerned with man's getting food. Surely Jesus said enough to convince us of that! It was He who said that His Father intended men to live without giving thought to the morrow, with that unconscious trust that all things would be supplied for their earthly needs so that worry and fear would be forever banished. It is true that we cannot live that way, but the fault lies not with the Lord of Harvests who has given us enough for every man in the world. That we cannot live by His precepts, that we stare aghast at the seeming impracticability of His message, is an indication of how far we have departed from God's will for man. Whatever might have been inevitable in older days, is no longer inevitable today. Two hundred years ago nobody in England could be blamed if the people in China or in India or in Africa were starving; they simply did not know about it. Today things are different. In the recent North African campaign, the now well-known bazooka was made in sufficient quantities within a few days and shipped to the front, where it apparently turned the tide of the battle of El Alamein. We did this because we had to do it. Our modern transportation system is such that we can ship just about anything anywhere in the world. No group of people is farther than sixty flying hours away from any other these days! If we cannot use the same ingenuity, the same eagerness, the same purposeful haste, in feeding

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the world's starving people as we do in destroying our enemies, the prayer for daily bread will mould in our mouths. The whole of human history backs up the truth that one nation cannot for long live in luxury while other nations starve. There must then be no asking for our daily bread without making that *us* as inclusive as all humankind.

Nor is the phrase "give us this day our daily bread" to be restricted to a meaning wholly temporal. Surely He who said "man shall not live by bread alone," wants us to charge that phrase with spiritual as well as with earthly meaning. Man will starve if he just eats food. He is an animal with a soul, and the soul can no more be fed with a slice of bread than a coke oven can be fed with slag. Man has to have a special diet for his soul.

Bread of thy body give me Lord,  
So shall I strengthened be.  
In life's grim struggle well sustained,  
If thou art found in me.<sup>2</sup>

"Give me this day, Lord, food sufficient for today." To us modern Americans that means three regular meals a day. If the soul of a man is to grow it must have regular nourishment; it will not grow on two meals a year or whenever a crisis happens. The airy supposition that the soul of a man can get along on nothing has no warrant in Holy Scripture or in Christian history or in daily experi-

<sup>2</sup> Higgins, John, "Hymn for the Holy Eucharist."

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ence. The unfortunate tendency of certain persons to think of the soul as a body with the backbone and viscera removed leads them to the conclusion that a soul, if such there be, feeds on air. Nothing could be further from the truth. The soul has to have food, its own kind of food, at regular intervals and with proper care. And this spiritual food is there for the asking, although it will not be given without the asking. It is free to all men but it is not distributed to all and sundry; just to those who seek. The food is prayer; it is the sense of His companionship; it is the perception of the one-ness of humanity; it is a thousand other things. And most of all it is the meeting with Him in the Holy Eucharist, where He gives to us that super-substantial Bread which is His Body, and the Wine which is His Blood. He has other ways of feeding us, but this is the main meal of the soul.

*The last of the three legitimate petitions has to do with forgiveness:* "and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." "Grant me a forgiving spirit, Lord!" Unsuspectingly we often lay a curse on ourselves when these words come too trippingly upon the tongue. We do not seriously want God to give us the same treatment we give to other people, because God does not treat people that way. It is fortunate for us that He does not! The prayer of the little girl, "Lord, make the bad people good and the good people easier to get along with," has too much truth in it to be altogether a joke. It is all of a piece with the couplet:



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The good get so cross with the wicked,  
The wicked so rude with the good.

There is something about religion that can harden human nature, that will make it uncompromising and self-righteous and impatient. And these are the fore-runners of hate and malice and unforgiveness. "Grant me a forgiving spirit" is a prayer that must constantly be on the lips and written in the heart of every Christian man.

It was not an armchair strategist and not an ardent Churchman but a British navy man who said to me a short while ago: "We've got to stop this hating business or there won't be anything left of anybody." A forgiving spirit is a primary requisite for anything like peace among the nations. If anyone should doubt the tremendous task the post-war Church will have of inculcating a forgiving spirit, let him talk to some of our soldiers who have experienced the horrors of fighting the Japanese in the South Pacific. Their attitude toward the Japanese is exactly the same attitude that American frontiersmen had toward the Indians: "the only good Indians are dead Indians." Our marines have found the dead bodies of their former comrades, not just killed, but tortured to death; and it has made them hate the Japanese, all the Japanese, every last one of them! As soon as hostilities cease we Christians must go back to Japan to take up with greater consecration a task we did too carelessly before. To do that we shall have to face the men and women whose sons and husbands were killed by the Japanese.

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and ask them to give us the money to take to those Japanese the Christian gospel. It will not be easy, for the cultivation of a forgiving spirit is one of the hardest things to do in the Christian life. But it is among the most necessary.

These then are three great petitions which we need never fear to bring before God. They are always legitimate, always acceptable in His sight. Jesus is proclaiming these three petitions as the essential attitudes of a Christian's life: for the coming of the Kingdom, for daily bread, and for a forgiving spirit. That these desires have not yet achieved actuality but are still in the stage of "becoming" was not the immediate concern of Christ when He first spoke His Prayer. Jesus is an ambassador from God, making known the Father's will for man. He is in that prayer of prayers announcing the Father's will. We too are ambassadors of God, and as long as we proclaim the message, the coming of the Kingdom, sufficient bread and a world of forgiving men are not idle dreams but things which one day shall be!

## The Prayer of Humble Access

**W**E do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy: Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. *Amen.*



## CHAPTER XV

### *THE HUMBLE GET THE GRACE*

**I**N THOSE DEATHLESS STORIES about King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table there is told the story of how Sir Galahad, the perfect knight, was led up to one of the seats at the table whereon no knight had yet sat. It was called "Siège Périlleus," for it was ordained that four hundred and fifty-four years after the Passion of our Lord, the seat should be taken by the best knight in the world. For him it would be harmless, but should any other sit thereon it would do him grievous hurt. The most honored seat at King Arthur's court went to the most perfect knight, and to him only. There is another table to which Jesus invites us, but a place there is not reserved only for the great and the good, but for all who with humble and faithful hearts present themselves at the holy board; for all who know both their own unworthiness and the power of God to save.

I am not worthy, holy Lord,  
That thou should'st come to me;  
Speak but the word: one gracious word  
Can set the sinner free.

—*Hymn (old) 323*

This is the mood with which we must come to His Table

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if the food He offers is to cleanse and refresh our souls.

*The holy meal is not a reward for goodness but a transfusion of His Life into our Life.* That queer perversion of thinking which bases the reception of the sacrament on our own worthiness is a strangely prevalent mode of thought in our modern life. In no sense is this feast a reward for goodness, a citation for merit, the privilege of the *unco guid*. The parallel between physical and spiritual food is so obvious that it would not need to be mentioned but for the unwillingness of many so-called Christians to recognize that parallel's validity. When we say that "we do not presume to come to this Thy Table trusting in our own righteousness," we say that both for ourselves and for all members of the human race at all times and in all places, be they saints or sinners, kings or commoners, learned or moronic. At no time have we ever earned the right to kneel at the altar; that is why Jesus died and rose again, that we might be justified in doing so through His mighty acts, and through them alone. The "manifold and great mercies" of God entitle all who have fulfilled the conditions of discipleship to take part in the meal.

We do not come then to receive a certification of our goodness, but to get the help we all so desperately need in the battle of life.

In the field of economics there is a law that "bad money drives out good money"; and this has been found to be true among the marts of men. In the spiritual world men have found that the evil resident in every man cannot be

### *The Humble Get the Grace*

killed by suppressing it, but only by introducing a new fresh stream of power into the personality. When a patient is sick, a doctor often determines that his patient needs a new fresh stream of healthy blood to combat the anemia or the microbes infecting the person's bloodstream. This is what our Lord does in the Holy Communion, for He knows that in the daily process of living, our lives are contaminated and the poisons of the world get into the bloodstream of the soul. We find ourselves bleakly aware of this and it is not just the leper of old who raises the cry: "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." It is our own soul's most earnest cry to Him. Jesus makes the same reply to us that He made in His earthly life to the sick man: "I will. Be thou clean."

A few decades ago a blood transfusion was given only to those patients who were in danger of death, and people often died in those days because the transfusion was too long delayed. Nowadays transfusions are frequently given *before* an operation to bolster and fortify the patient's body for the approaching surgery. As a consequence more people recover from serious operations than before. So with the Holy Communion; it is not for emergency use only but for the continual upbuilding and refreshing of our souls. If we may say it with reverence, the Body and Blood of Christ is the effectual and sufficient Decontaminator, the agency by which the poisons of the world, the flesh, and the devil are rightly counteracted.

There is one peculiarity about our human blood; for

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we do not all have the same type. There are four main types of human blood but no one of these types may both give to and receive from the other three types. The Blood of Jesus is different and unique, for He can both receive us into Himself and He can give to all men healing from the red stream of Calvary.

A successful transfusion means new life for the patient, a clearer vision, a healthier outlook on life, a new assurance that he can combat the disease which has overtaken him. Those who from His own precious life partake are given a new spiritual outlook, a strengthened faith, a more vigorous consecration.

*The effects of our partaking are perceptible both to ourselves and to others.* It is logical that this should be so. For if it is true, and it is true, that diet has much to do with the development of the physical body, then the same should be true in the domain of the soul. It is a common observation that the children growing up in this generation are more healthy, are stronger and larger, than were the people of the former generations. One has only to look at the suits of armor used in medieval times to know that this is true. Proper diet is one of the most important factors in this change. It is not unreasonable therefore to suppose and to expect that the regular partaking of the Holy Communion will have its inevitable effect on the soul of the one who partakes; as long as he does so in penitence and in faith and with the constantly renewed intention to lead a new life. We have a prayer after the ser-



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vice which asks God that as a result of it we may "evermore perceive within ourselves the fruits of His redemption." And, in all humility, that is exactly what happens. We *do* find ourselves with a quickened sense of our own imperfections, with a renewed desire to do God's will, with a deepened knowledge of the road that lies ahead. This is not conceit but God's revelation to us. It is true that continually feeding on Him and on His life will cause men to "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus."

There is a story told of an old house in the town of Gorcum in Holland where it is said that at a certain hour at twilight the face of a woman appears at one of the windows, with a bonnet on her head such as was worn by Dutch women a century or more ago. Two months after her wedding in 1812 her husband was conscripted for Napoleon's army and the fatal march on Moscow, where he must have died in the Russian snows. No word came of him, but Anneké, his bride, never tired of waiting. She was a bride of twenty when he left and eighty when she died. But every day of her life she sat at that window waiting for her lover and husband to come back home. The legend says that as the years went by her features imprinted themselves on the windowpane, and at twilight one can see her face there today.

In the realm where work the powers unseen, that is vastly more true, for the face of the Saviour will imprint itself on the souls of those who take His life into theirs.

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God does give His grace to the humble and to them alone;  
to those who come, not seeking a reward but only for  
love of Him.

No gate of pearl, no branch of palm I merit,  
Nor street of shining gold.  
Suffice it if, my good and ill unreckoned  
And both forgiven through thy abounding grace,  
I find myself by hands familiar beckoned,  
Unto my fitting place.<sup>1</sup>

Life with Jesus is not something only in the hereafter,  
but in the life that now is. We "may dwell in Him and  
He in us."

<sup>1</sup> Whittier, John G., "At Last," Boston: Houghton, Mifflin. Used by permission.

## The Words of Administration

**T**HE Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.

**T**HE Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.



## CHAPTER XVI

### *WHAT THAT WORD DID MAKE IT*

SOME THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO the brilliant Frenchman, Binet, discovered a way of measuring intelligence; and although the first findings have been modified from time to time, yet they remain basically sound. Among other things, Binet observed that the average three-year-old child, when shown a picture, would simply enumerate the objects in the picture; that a seven-year-old would describe the objects therein; and that a twelve-year-old would interpret the objects in the picture. Here is a clear view of the three levels of development in human intelligence and appreciation.

Too few religious people see that this scientific truth can be and should be applied to religious beliefs. There is nothing sweeter than a child-like faith—in a child; but when the lower levels of a child's faith persist to adult years the result is apt to be childish. Faith, like intelligence, is meant to grow, and when it ceases to grow it begins to deteriorate. Some of the bitterest quarrels of Christendom have centered about the meaning of the Holy Communion; and whole Christian groups have separated themselves from other groups of Christians because they insisted that the service must mean what they thought it

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meant and nothing more than that. Christians have gone further than that: they have crystallized their single points of view into official declarations about what the service means. This is as foolish a solution as it is to think that the glory of a diamond is exhausted by glimpsing the reflected and refracted light from a single facet. We are wiser to take our stand on Holy Scripture and accept the words of Jesus at the Institution of the Feast, and say: "This is my Body . . . this is my Blood.' How that comes about I know not, but in that Feast He is there." To paraphrase H. W. Farrington's beautiful hymn, "Our Christ":

I know not how that Christ my Lord,  
Could thus encompassed be.  
I only know that Bread, that Wine,  
Have brought new life to me.

Perhaps we ought never to try defining and explaining just *how* Christ comes to us in our Communion, any more than we can define or explain completely the beauty of a sunset or the grace of a swallow's wing. The greatest things in life are only secondarily to be analyzed; they are primarily to be appreciated and used. John Donne has said the last word for some of us about what the Holy Communion means:

He was the Word that spake it,  
He took the Bread and brake it,  
And what that Word did make it,  
I do believe and take it.

## *What That Word Did Make It*

*His word made it a meal of remembrance.* If one fact stands out in the story of the Apostolic Church, it is that from the earliest days after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus the Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." For Jesus had set the foundation pattern of the Christian life, and He expected those who called themselves by His name to follow that pattern if they expected to have the fruits of the Spirit. The "breaking of Bread" took them back to the night "in which He was betrayed," and whenever they did it they did it "in remembrance of Him." In plain language they were obeying His express and explicit orders: for to Jesus our Leader faithful obedience is the only true test of devotion. He said, you remember: "If ye love me keep my commandments." This is one of His express commandments that we should take part in this feast in memory of Him.

There is an exquisite fitness in that He gave such importance to a meal, for in human life meals express our community as nothing else does. Birthday anniversaries, weddings, Christmas, Thanksgiving—all call for a family meal where we feel our family solidarity and achieve a sense of "togetherness." When Jesus placed so much emphasis on a family meal He touched a very deep chord in human nature. Let your mind go back through the years and recollect the joyful times you have had, and think how many of those happy occasions were centered about the family board!

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Jesus might have chosen other ways of keeping His memory green in our hearts, but He laid them aside and bade us think in terms of eating together. No other religion in the world ever can be quite as strong as the Christian faith because no other religion centers itself and its worship on a family meal. Just as human life is largely conditioned by the need for physical food, so the spiritual life in Christ is conditioned by the need for heavenly food. It is the best way to remember Him.

*His word made it a dramatic setting forth of that Kingdom which is on its way.* The love of drama is inherent in humankind, whether it be the delight that children take in "dressing up" or the more sophisticated adult audience listening to a performance of Shakespeare. We have ample evidence that human beings get deep satisfaction from acting out an idea. This is perhaps one of the reasons that in Protestantism in general there is a return to the "chancel-type" of church structure with an altar rail. Those who come to an altar rail to receive their communions are not spectators but actors in a drama, the significance of which too often escapes them. They are "coming to God," as did the prodigal son of old, to get in touch with their God. By the very act of walking forward to the rail they set forth dramatically the Kingdom of God for which we daily pray. The altar represents the throne of God and before it we kneel; and by that act we say that before the kingdom of brotherhood can come to the world, mankind will have to kneel



### *What That Word Did Make It*

before God, and not strut around in self-conceit. We say that man must come of his own volition, for God will never force him to kneel at the altar of His sacrifice and love.

The rail itself is a message and a warning, for when we come there to kneel we do so as equals in the sight of God, who feeds us all with the same Food. The incidental accidents of birth, of family, of native intelligence, of education, of race, and of color are at this rail obliterated and forgotten; for here we are all one. It is a mistaken modern notion that the Christian faith teaches that all men are brethren; they are not. What the Christian faith says is that we are "all one in Christ Jesus," which is a very different thing. Mankind never will be a brotherhood without Christ, for He imparts the indispensable binding element to human brotherhood which is Himself. It is in this act of kneeling together that the Christian sociology is best seen and dramatized. And when enough men and women in this world kneel together the Kingdom of God on earth will not be on its way; it will be here!

*His word makes it a re-presentation of the Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.* No explanation of the Holy Communion which ignores this aspect has any "wholeness" in it, for whether he wills it or not, the minister as priest is showing forth to the faithful the sacrifice of sacrifices "offered once for all on Calvary's Tree." When we shut our eyes after looking at a strong light, there comes a suc-

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cession of "after images" on our retinae, wherein the shape and form of the original light are rendered exact and entire. The sacrifice on Calvary was offered there once and for all and complete, and yet it must be set forth constantly by the fellowship at worship, and be re-presented before them; for Christ eternally offers Himself for us as a timeless extension of Calvary.

It is at this point that we present ourselves, "our souls and bodies," all that we are and all we hope ever to be, to Him, as the earnest of our faith and love. It is at this point that we offer to Him the sacrifice of the whole Christian community in loving service, and present it at His feet.

*His word made it food for my soul.* It is no calumny of Christ to say that desire for heavenly Food is not natural to us, but rather an acquired taste. Again, the natural man does not want the things of God, but the things which minister to his body and to his mind. The Eucharist is divine medicine, but it is like the physician's medicine; it must be taken faithfully and regularly before the benefits appear. There comes a time when we would no more think of doing without that Food for our souls than we would think of doing without food for our bodies. There was a time when the alchemists of the middle ages sought to transmute base metals, lead, iron, copper, into gold. They did not find the answer in those days, but they were right in their major premise, that any base metal *can* be transmuted into gold; for modern chemists can

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do it. The Food which Christ gives us does not act on our souls like an opiate or an anesthetic; it does not deaden our animal natures and slowly stifle our unlawful and natural desires. That is what Buddhism teaches, but it is not the Christian message. The gospel of Jesus says that He can take us as we are and wherever we are and transmute the desires and aims of the natural man into the desires and aims of the "man in Christ." So shall we become "like Him." This is what happens when He dwells in us and we in Him. He sublimates our natural drives and instincts and impregnates them with His own life.

Thus would I live; yet now  
Not I, but he,  
In all his power and love,  
Henceforth alive in me.

—*Hymn 183*

This is what communion with Jesus does, this and much more: to be "forever treasured in the memory, and to be paid for in a more faithful life." This is what His Word did make it. That "I do believe and take it!"



The Thanksgiving  
The Gloria in Excelsis  
The Benediction

**A**LMIGHTY and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and dost assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of his most precious death and passion. And we humbly beseech thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.  
*Amen.*

**G**LORY be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that

takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy; thou only art the Lord; thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. *Amen.*

**T**HE Peace of God, which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord: And the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*

## CHAPTER XVII

### THANKS AND PRAISE AND BLESSING

HERE ARE THREE ROBUST NOTES on which this service ends: Thanks, and Praise, and Blessing. These are the final words of God to us, before we go out and take up again the "daily round, the common task."

*"Now Thank We All Our God!"* If the heart of the Christian faith is grateful penitence, then our supremest thanks should be reserved for the supreme gifts of God. There are very few people who are entire strangers to thankfulness, for no matter how self-centered a life may become there are times when gratitude wells up in the heart. Most of us are vaguely thankful much of the time for all the mercies with which a good God has surrounded us. Perhaps God is more often saddened for us, not because we are not thankful, but because we are thankful most of the time for the less important things. I once watched a duck disporting herself with apparent glee in a dirty little mud puddle, when a few hundred yards beyond were the clear waters of a beautiful lake. Human beings often act in just that way!

This Thanksgiving toward the end of the service gets right to the heart of real gratitude, which is for Christ our Saviour and the great things He hath done: "for that thou

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dost vouchsafe to feed us who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ." At the root of that statement is the conviction that the world can be made over because of what God did for it outside the city wall. In the words of the General Thanksgiving, we thank Him for what God wrought on Calvary, the "redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ" whereby God forever pledges us his love. We are thankful for "the means of grace" with which we are surrounded and encompassed: for his Holy Word, for the Christian fellowship, and for the availing sacraments. We are thankful that a life lived for God and unto God is no aimless meandering but a sure and steady progress toward an ever-growing life which we call the "hope of glory."

The greatest group in the world is "this holy fellowship," which is not a visionary and nebulous hope, but an objective and present reality. It is a fellowship beside which membership in family, or clan, or nation, or race fades into another and lesser magnitude.

We thank thee that thy Church, unsleeping  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.

As o'er each continent and island  
The dawn leads on another day,



### *Thanks and Praise and Blessing*

The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.

—Hymn. 179

It is one of the saddest commentaries on modern life that so many people make pathetic attempts to live the Christian life on their own, outside the "holy fellowship." They are like men who light their room with a candle when they might share in the output of the electric power company. There are very few people who stay outside the "holy fellowship" who grow in prayer and spiritual understanding. It is logical that this is so, for there are "very few people who have earned the right not to be Christians" and to stay outside the fellowship.

It is in this fellowship that we get the strength to "do all such good works" as God has "prepared for us to walk in."

*Praise to God immortal praise!* The "Gloria in excelsis" strikes the penultimate note of our Communion, the note of praise. The Moslem faith forbids its members to ask any favors of Allah, for to the Moslem all prayer is a recital of praise. It is a lesson many Christians might learn, for too much of our trafficking with the Eternal is in terms of requests for personal favors. A truer test of our life of worship is a growing capacity to "praise Him from whom all blessings flow."

It is singularly true that we do not find it easy to praise God; it is easier to ask favors! Perhaps we find it hard to praise God because we find it hard to praise the people

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we meet and live with. Few find it hard to confess the sins of other people, and we are all notoriously able to discern those faults in others which are most glaring in ourselves. "Oh, I think so-and-so is a fine man, and very able, and doubtless he does a lot of good, BUT. . . ." We all have used that and similar introductory phrases in assessing our fellows. St. John said that if a man would love God he had better learn to love his brother also. And it is equally true that if a man will learn to praise his God, he had better learn also to praise his fellow men.

The Gloria in Excelsis lifts us to the highest level of human life, the level where we praise our Creator. It echoes the song of the angels on Christmas night; it is a pure hymn of praise to the ever blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It strikes the note that every Christian at times must hear in his inmost soul, for it is the dominant note of this wide universe—"praise to God, immortal praise."

I heard . . .

Earth's lowliest and loudest notes

Her million times ten million throats

Exalt Him loud and long,

And lips and lungs and tongues of grace

From every part and every place. . .

I heard it all, each every note

Of every lung and tongue and throat,

Aye, every rhythm and rhyme,

Of everything that lives and loves

*Thanks and Praise and Blessing*

And upward ever upward moves  
From lowly to sublime.<sup>1</sup>

*"My blessing season this in Thee."* "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" sounds the ultimate note in those Holy Mysteries wherein God gives to us his "pledge of life eternal." The result of contact with God in Christ is peace of body, of mind, of soul: the kind of peace which this world is impotent either to give or to take away. Having Christ come to us means that we can have the confidence which is the sole foundation for the lasting peace of the spirit. But this peace of God is not a luxurious and general relaxation of the kind we are often urged to undertake for frazzled nerves; it is not a process of vegetating into a hazy dream-world wherein nothing much matters. G. A. Studdert-Kennedy reminded us a generation ago that the peace of God was something much more vital and virile:

Peace does not mean the end of all our striving,  
Joy does not mean the drying of our tears.  
Peace is the power that comes to souls arriving  
Up to the light where God himself appears.<sup>2</sup>

It is a message that this generation also needs.

"Keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord." It does not take a "heap of living" to know that the crux

<sup>1</sup> Author unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Studdert-Kennedy, G. A., *The Word and the Work*, New York: Longmans, Green. Used by permission.

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of our life-problem is to *keep* in the knowledge and love of God; it is so easy to get away from prayer, from communion, from reading our Bibles, from remembering Christ's standards. The restlessness of the world takes hold, like a gust of wind filling a sail, and we are off God's course, off on our own tack once again. The reason that airplanes can fly so accurately at night, through cloud, over unknown country, hour after hour, is that they can at any time turn on their radios and know if they are on the beam. For airports send out constantly that invisible beam to guide the airliner home, to keep it in the straight path, to warn it when it starts to drift from wind or weather. So does God reach out from His home on high, to show us the straight path to Himself and to our final home.

When old Polonius had done with giving advice to his departing son Laertes, you will remember, he ends with these beautiful words: "Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!" It is a greater than Polonius who speaks to us at the end of this service, but the message is surely the same!

The message of the benediction is that God will so season this experience we have had with Jesus in the Holy Communion, that hereafter our lives will have in them the tincture of the Spirit of God; the God "who in these Holy Mysteries giveth us a pledge of life eternal."

















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